Tamil TIMES

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– Voltaire

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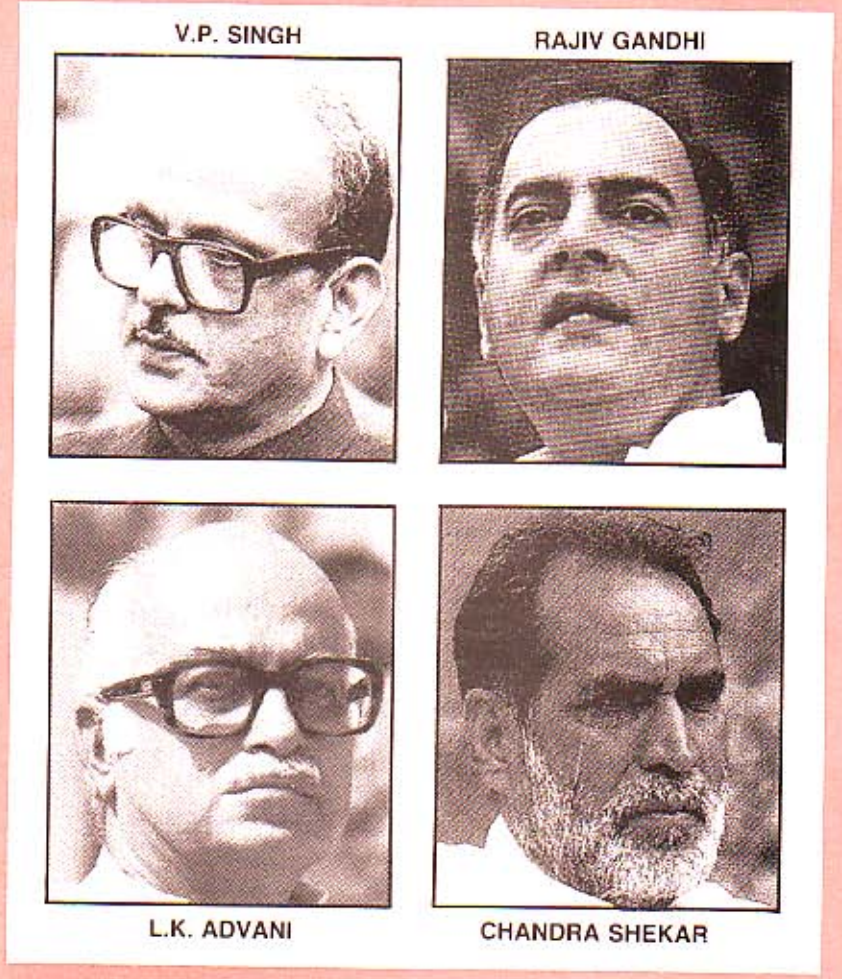
The Indian Election Scene



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A DIASPORA IN THE MAKING

The last few weeks have witnessed a sharp escalation of the war in North-East Sri Lanka and some of the fiercest fighting between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been taking place in most areas. The body count of the dead and injured on either side has been unprecedentedly high.

As the fighting intensifies the plight of the civilian population has become ever more precarious.

The people of the north have been subjected to a virtual economic and communications blockade since the outbreak of hostilities in June last year. They have been and are being deprived of essential supplies of food, medicine, clothing, fuel and other items required for the people to survive. The presence of the International Committee of the Red Cross and the small quantities of items they are allowed to take and distribute, hardly meet even a fraction of the needs of the people who have been driven to a point of starvation. Credible reports substantiate the charge that several people have died of starvation and lack of timely medical treatment. The efforts of religious, charitable and other voluntary organisations to provide relief to the affected people have been and are being thwarted and hampered by the government and security forces. The total lack of concern and cynical disregard for the enormous suffering which the people have been and are being subjected to is demonstrated by the number of items that have been banned from being transported to the north. The list of prohibited items issued and displayed by the security forces include 'dangerous' substances such as surgical instruments, medicine cotton wool, gauze, drugs including aspirin, disprin and panadol, shopping bags, plastic goods, shoes, black shorts, sanitary towels, candles, camphor, cement, vehicle spare parts, newsprint, excise books, kerosene, diesel, petrol etc. etc.! In addition to these items, because of the disruption of transport and the continuous fighting, even the transport of rice, flour and sugar are limited to very small quantities.

Besides the deprivation of supplies essential to the survival of a community, government forces have resorted to and are subjecting the civilian population to indiscriminate aerial bombing with inevitable casualties in their thousands and the destruction of homes, hospitals, schools and other public and private buildings. Their economic and social infrastructure is being literally decimated.

In the eastern province where the security forces claim to have gained control, people have been arbitrarily killed and thousands have 'disappeared' without trace.

The people are caught in the crossfire of a continuing war, deprived of the basic needs for survival, subjected to indiscriminate aerial attacks, facing danger of physical elimination and unable to endure the intolerable sacrifices that they are called upon to make. The great majority of the people in the north-east have been displaced and have become refugees.

It is small wonder that literally thousands have left and are leaving the war-torn areas. What they regarded as their traditional homeland does no longer provide a home or a land in which they can live in safety and freedom to carry on their normal life. Those who have the means and the physical strength have gone or are going to India. Many more are finding ways and means of taking refuge in western countries. Those already in foreign countries are helping their kith and kin to get out. It is reported that approximately three to four hundred Tamils are leaving the land of their birth each week. Thousands have moved and are moving to the south of the island where they live in appalling conditions but with relative physical safety.

What is happening is the tragic dismemberment of the Tamil community under a government which is prosecuting a relentless and ruthless war against a whole people although claiming it to be against the LTTE. The Tamil community on whose behalf a war is being fought with the declared intention to retain, protect and promote its identity and integrity as a people and as a nation is in the process of dismemberment and dispersal leaving behind the old, infirm, deprived and dispossessed. A Sri Lankan Tamil diaspora located in various parts of the world is already in the making caused by an apparently interminable war with no end in sight.

Sri Lanka, a tropical hell

Tim McGirk in Trincomalee, where death squads calling themselves 'Black Cats' and Green Tigers' cruise around in unmarked vehicles.

The Sri Lankan soldiers were in the back of a lorry pushing around a suspected Tamil terrorist, a barefoot, middle-aged man too dazed and hurt to fend off their punches. The soldiers heaved the man against a crate of empty soft drink bottles and then stood back to appreciate the glassy music of their savagery.

'Jolly nice afternoon, isn't it?' said a brisk officer with a pock-marked face as I watched his platoon shove their victim over the side of the lorry. He slammed on to the asphalt road face down and was then dragged inside the gate of the 22 Army Brigade headquarters at Plantaine Point, which has become notorious in north-eastern Sri Lanka as a detention camp where many who enter either vanish or are found dead in nearby jungle with their throats cut.

Several prominent citizens in Trincomalee, who prefer not to be identified for fear of reprisals, claim that death squads also operate from this base, although they are not directly under the commanding officer's control. They call themselves the Black Cats or the Green Tigers, and they cruise around the town and outlying villages in unmarked vans.

The Sri Lankan death squads are hunting for known sympathisers of the Tamil Tigers, separatist guerrillas who control the northern tip of this island nation and are now stepping up their offensive in the eastern region. The army holds the main towns, roads and little else; the terrain of coconut groves and hilly jungle suits the Tigers perfectly. Since the civil war erupted between the Tamils and the Sinhalese Buddhist majority in 1983 it has claimed more than 20,000 lives.

Along the eastern coast, it is not a tidy war of insurgents versus army. The conflict is also devastating the Tamil, Sinhalese and Muslim communities, each a third of Trincomalee's population.

Hardest hit are probably the Tamils. Informed citizens said that every day several Tamils are grabbed off the Trincomalee streets or rounded up outside the refugee camps. Most of the 33,000 refugees in the Trincomalee district are Tamils fleeing from harsh army reprisals against the Tiger guerrillas, who attack then disappear into jungle dense enough to hide wild elephant herds.

Although relief agencies provide money to the government for food, no provisions have reached the camps for almost six weeks. 'People are beginning to starve' said one camp worker.

Usually, it is the innocent Tamil villagers who suffer the brunt of the security forces' frustration. After Tiger guerrillas murdered a policeman at the village of Iruthayapurah on 30 March his fellow officers went on a rampage, burning shops and hacking to death 11 Tamil farmers.

In a raid on one camp several months ago, 43 Tamils were taken for interrogation inside the Plantaine Point base, and so far only six have been released. 'I was kept blindfolded for two days and beaten with iron bars', said one former detainee who has since fled from Trincomalee. 'I saw some of my friends being beaten to death. Then their corpses were heaped together with tyres and burnt inside the camp'.

The Tamil Tigers have been no less brutal. They dragoon teenagers into the guerrilla force, arming them with semi-automatic weapons, a cyanide capsule to bite if captured and Marxist dogma against the evils of drinking capitalist Coca-Cola. In the Jaffna area, under Tiger control, they demand a revolutionary tax and set exorbitant fares for Tamil refugees trying to escape by boat to India. The Tigers have also silenced some Tamil critics in Jaffna.

At dawn on Wednesday, a fleet of Sinhalese fishermen in dugout catamarans were just spreading their nets at the opening of Trincomalee's huge bay when a speedboat with five uniformed men raced out, spraying the fishermen with machine-gun fire. Nine fishermen were killed and another 16 are still missing. Police blamed the Tigers, but other Trincomalee sources said it could as easily have been a Sri Lankan navy boat, whose crew mistook the fishermen for a guerrilla landing force.

The next day, 2,000 Sinhalese with axes and knives mobbed into the Tamil section of Trincomalee seeking revenge. 'A massacre was averted because the police stopped the Sinhalese. In the past, the police have usually joined in against Tamils', said one citizen.

The Muslim community is also being attacked by the guerrillas. Over the past six months looting and killing by the Tigers have driven the Muslims into refugee camps around Muttur, a mainly Muslim town secured by the army.

A young Muslim widow told how her husband was murdered by Tamils during a village bicycle race. Now, the Muslims have formed their own rustic militia, with army permission, to guard their villages. But often, in their fear and anger, the Muslim militia end up taking revenge on hapless Tamils living nearby.

In the capital, Colombo, diplomats say that the poor and ill-equipped Sri Lankan army can never blast the Tigers out of their jungle strongholds. Some say that Ranasinghe Premadasa, the President, has given the army until June to re-gain territory lost to the Tigers before resuming talks with the rebels.

Few are optimistic about the outcome; so far, the Tigers have refused any offer that does not give them the eastern coast, even though Tamils here are not a majority. As one Muslim refugee lamented: 'This island used to be paradise. Now it is hell'.

Courtesy of 'The Independent')

Fear rules over Trincomalee

Trincomalee's men disappear as the army sweeps in, writes **Christopher Morris**

The Tamil refugee glanced nervously over his shoulder, making sure no one else was listening. 'They come at night, wearing black T-shirts. They take two or three people away who are usually never seen again'. According to local rumour, the smoke which rises regularly from the grounds of a local hotel is caused by burning bodies.

Under a thin veneer of normality, Trincomalee is a city which functions on fear. It was one of the first areas to be retaken by the Sri Lankan army from Tamil Tiger rebels, when fighting broke out again last June. Thousands of people have fled, and thousands more remain as refugees.

The city's army commander, Brigadier Siri Peiris, says he hears reports of disappearances, but denies army involvement. 'Our job is to isolate the Tamil Tigers from the ordinary people', he says. Thousands of Tamils are regularly rounded up and brought before informers for identification.

As a result, most of the young Tamil men have vanished. 'The young men have either fled to India, joined the Tamil Tigers or been killed', according to relief workers. Refugee camps are dominated by women, children and old men.

At Clappenburg refugee camp, thousands of people are crammed into huge aircraft hangars, where each family has a few square feet of concrete floor. The government supplies food, but conditions are poor.

Camps which were set up as temporary solutions are threatening to become permanent problems as the war

Continued on page 7

AFTER RANJAN WHAT?

Rita Sebastian from Colombo

After Ranjan what? As far as the armed forces were concerned there was never any doubt that the strategy mapped out by Ranjan Wijeratne for, if not 'eliminating the Tigers' at least militarily weakening them would continue with the same ruthless determination.

Speculation that with the key Defence man gone, the government would adopt a soft line was dispelled as the battle intensified in the north-east region, following his assassination.

The fighting has been fierce and bloody. Both sides have suffered heavy casualties. In just under five weeks the government claims that between 500-700 Tigers have been killed and several more wounded. While the combined forces lost 111 of their men and had 136 wounded.

Yet the fighting not withstanding a possible cessation of hostilities is in the air again. We have already gone through the motions of a truce several times before only to realise that it was merely an illusion. Even during the 13-month long peace dialogue 'war' seemed lurking somewhere beneath the surface, as was evidenced in several minor confrontations glossed over by the government, as the indiscretions of a few over enthusiastic Tiger cadres. It was only when fresh hostilities broke out in June 1990, that the government realised that things were not what they seemed, that while talking peace the preparations for a major battle was on.

What benefit is it to the people, if the guns on both sides are stilled for brief spells, only to begin firing again. What the people and the country needs is a return to peace and normalcy and that can be achieved only through a negotiated political settlement that will meet the aspirations of the Tamil minority and at the same time satisfy the majority community, that its interests have not been sold out to the minority.

For so long there has been a naked hypocrisy among successive governments for resolving the national question. Parties in Opposition have been only too ready to make promises that have been easily forgotten when they have been voted into power.

Even today when political parties in the South campaign for the local polls, the first since 1982, scheduled for May 11, most of them are silent on the north-east issue. It is as if the north-east is some alien territory far removed from the south. How else would one reconcile the apathy in the south to the killings in the north-east. For the people in the south the killings have been reduced to a matter of numbers that has ceased to prick their collective conscience.

It is this seeming indifference that has made rival Tamil groups and concerned Tamil citizens turn to the powerful Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC) boss and Minister for Tourism and Rural Industrial Development, S. Thondaman as a possible mediator in the conflict.

'I want some indication from the Tiger leadership, directly or indirectly, that they would agree to my mediation, and also an indication that they would be amenable to a compromise formula' says Thondaman. He, like most people believe that both sides let 'slip a golden opportunity' for resolving issues during their peace talks.

The Tigers it is being said are marking time till the Indian elections. On the new leadership that emerges will hinge their future strategy. And to that extent Sri Lanka will find herself once more on a confrontational course with India, something that both countries would try their best to avoid.

The fence-mending exercise during the Shukla visit has gone a long way to smoothing the ruffled feathers of the Sri Lankan establishment and making co-operation and collaboration the key words.

The choice of Neville Kanekeratne, diplomat and international civil servant who served as Sri Lankan Ambassador in both Washington and Moscow, is indication of the importance the government attaches to its relationship with India, of strengthening bi-lateral ties. As Bradman Weerakoon, Special Advisor to President Ranasinghe Premadasa on International Affairs told the India-Sri Lanka Forum recently, the nineties will see a 'qualitative' difference in the relationship between the two countries.

Weerakoon made the pertinent point that Sri Lanka often tended to think of herself in isolation, forgetting that India was her closest and only neighbour.

And in resolving the Tamil question there is no doubt that India will remain interested, given the fact of the 50 million Tamils in Tamil Nadu.

Even in the face of India's repeated expressions of 'concern' it is time we realised that the political will for resolving the Tamil question must come from within the country itself, it must come from both the political leadership and the people.

Meanwhile the Indian High Commission in Colombo has been actively promoting rival Tamil groups in Colombo in their demand for an interim administration in the north-east region, comprising representatives of parties elected to office at the Provincial Council elections in 1988.

A demand turned down by the government on the basis that in the conflict ridden north-east no provincial administration is possible. The argument put forward by the Council of Hindu Organisations in the country, that also favours an interim administration by elected representatives is that, today in the absence of such a body the needs of the Tamils goes by default. Whether it is relief or rehabilitation or the question of disappearances and killings, there is nobody to voice their grievances.

But how realistic is it to assume that rival Tamil groups can move back to the eastern province and pick up from where they left off. So much has changed since then. The thousands of Indian soldiers who provided them protection are no longer there. The Sri Lankan forces, stretched to the limit to hold some of the territory gained from the Tigers are in no position to provide them a protective umbrella even in multi-ethnic eastern Trincomalee, the seat of the provincial administration. How then can they function effectively.

Will a man like Thondaman, therefore, shrewd and clever politician that he is, succeed where others have failed, and bring the Tigers back to the negotiating table. And will the Tigers realise the truth of President Ranasinghe Premadasa's contention, articulated at a recent election meeting in the south, that the Tigers will have a chance of resolving their demands only during his term of office. If they don't they will never get another chance.

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People & Politics

★ Ranjan, Victim of Suicide Mission?

IN the absence of any significant breakthrough so far in the investigations relating to the assassination last month of Sri Lanka's State Minister for Defence, Ranjan Wijeratne, the opposition parties have called upon the government to appoint an independent commission of inquiry to probe the matter as 'various rumours are afloat among the people, among MPs as well as in the armed forces and ranks of the police'.

So far the only concrete lead the police have had was to identify the owner of the white coloured Hiace van in which the explosives were packed. After investigations, the police have reportedly traced the owner and are satisfied that the vehicle was stolen by 'unidentified persons' some two days previously at the Fort in Colombo. Police inspired rumours about the alleged presence in Colombo of LTTE's Batticaloa leader 'Newton' two days before the assassination remain unsubstantiated and have been discounted as mere speculation. However, Defence Secretary General, Cyril Ranatunga asserted at a press conference in Colombo that it 'had been conclusively ascertained that the LTTE was responsible for the bomb blast' that killed Ranjan Wijeratne and 30 others, but he failed to offer any evidence to support his assertion.

Claiming that the LTTE has targetted several more VVIPs for assassination, the Defence Secretary alleged that a group headed by 'Kantharupan' was responsible for Ranjan's murder. He also claimed that one Eliathamby Kirupalan from Kayts had travelled through India from Europe about ten days before the assassination and that he had transported electronic equipment and accessories required for explosive devices.

In the meantime, some credible sources say that the culprits responsible for this well planned and efficiently executed assassination will never be caught because the assassins are no longer in the land of the living and that it was carried out by a two-member suicide squad who located themselves in the van packed with explosives and triggered off the bomb as the Minister's entourage approached.

★ Peace Moves as Fighting Intensifies

THE continuing intensified military operations by government forces in North-East Sri Lanka in recent weeks have somewhat belied the belief that it was only Ranjan Wijeratne who was personally responsible for insisting on a military campaign against the LTTE and that 'Sri Lankan President R. Premadasa and others in his government wanted the problem to be solved through discussions'.

The significance of the much publicised meeting between the mild-mannered and soft-spoken Presidential Special Advisor, Mr. Bradman Weerakoon and LTTE's Paris-based spokesman Mr. Lawrence Thilakar has been played down by both sides. Apparently it was only a chance meeting in the coffee lounge at the United Nations building at Geneva. Mr. Weerakoon had come as head of the Sri Lanka delegation attending the sessions of the UN Human Rights Commission, and Mr. Thilakar had come to the same venue in the company of some expatriate Tamils to lobby support for the LTTE. After all they had become acquainted before during happier times when Mr. Thilakar had been a member of the LTTE delegation having discussions with the government of Sri Lanka.

It transpires that during this 'chat' over coffee which lasted some 45 minutes, Mr. Weerakoon wanted to know the LTTE's response to the government's terms for a cessation of hostilities and resumption of negotiations – some of the terms being (1) LTTE should make a declaration of its intention to cease the possession and use of weapons; (2) other Tamil groups also would take part in any future talks; (3) LTTE leader V. Prabhakaran should personally participate in such talks.

Mr. Thilakar had reasserted the LTTE's basic stand that the government should recognise the Tamils as a 'nation entitled to the right to self determination'; the LTTE would never make any declaration regarding giving up of arms; the LTTE rejected the idea of other Tamil groups participating in any talks which should only be between the government and the LTTE, but if the government was anxious, it was welcome to include representatives of other Tamil groups as part of the government's delegation. As for Prabhakaran's participation, Mr. Thilakar's position was, 'Our main concern is for Prabhakaran's safety. We don't trust the government and he would not be safe in such a situation. No way will our leader be involved. The people won't allow it'.

★ A Change of Attitude or Tactics

THE induction of Mr. Bradman Weerakoon into the Premadasa inner sanctum would appear to have brought about a radical shift in the hitherto adopted intransigent attitude towards international human rights organisations and their expressions of concern for the human rights situation in Sri Lanka. This shift was obviously evident in the intervention he made on behalf of the government before the recently held sessions of the United Nations Human Rights Commission. Mr. Weerakoon's rather low key and unprovocative response to the severe criticisms levelled at the government for its appalling record was in sharp contrast to Sri Lanka's response on previous occasions. Fundamental to his approach was the recognition that Sri Lanka was facing a crisis of confidence not only among non-governmental organisations but also among foreign governments which were beginning to articulate open criticism against the Sri Lankan government. They were not unaware of the tens of thousands of persons who have been summarily killed and made to disappear since 1988. Donor countries had already warned that future aid would be dependent on the steps that the government would take to effect an improvement of the human rights situation.

Late last year, Sri Lanka had extended an invitation to the UN Working Group on 'Disappearances' to visit Sri Lanka to study the situation. This time Mr. Weerakoon went a step further and announced that Sri Lanka was prepared to receive the UN's Special Raporteur on Arbitrary Killings and Summary Executions. He was also seen having discussions with the delegation of Amnesty International which had been denounced as a 'terrorist organisation' by two cabinet ministers only a few months earlier. Now comes the news that the government was prepared to allow a 'research mission' of AI to visit Sri Lanka. It is to be noted that the last time an AI mission visited Sri Lanka was in 1975 and since 1977, the government had refused permission despite repeated requests.

★ LTTE's Silavaturai Adventure

WHY did the Tigers invest so much of its military effort and risk so many of its cadres in launching the attack on the Silavaturai army camp in the Mannar district?

The well informed 'Taraki' (known to be a Tamil who at one time belonged to a Tamil militant group) gives his answer in his weekly column in the 'Sunday Island' of March 31:

'Their high command had sent large numbers of cadres from Jaffna. The attack group had taken coffins with it in anticipation of a large number of casualties.

'The fall of Silavaturai would have given the LTTE total control of that stretch of the Mannar coast which lies between Kudiramalai point on the northern end of Puttalam district and Arippu the estuary below the island of Mannar.

'The segment of Mannar coast is important for LTTE's naval operations for three reasons. First, the safest run from Tamil Nadu to the north of Sri Lanka is the one that zig zags through the shifting sandbanks which make up the Adam's Bridge between Thanuskodi and Talaimannar. It is also safe when it is off season on the Pt. Calemere Jaffna run; when the sea generally is as calm as a pond. No seasoned boatman would want to try his luck on a sea that is not manageably tumultous.

'To carry on a regular and effective operation on this run one must have at least partial control of this segment of the Mannar coast. . .But the LTTE can safely transfer large and precious supplies only if they can totally control and incapacitate the army in that region. . .'.

★ Banned from the North

THE security forces have banned the transport to northern Sri Lanka of several goods many of which are essential for the life of the community. A list of the prohibited items has been displayed by the police in public places in Vavuniya town which is now regarded as a gateway from the south to the north.

The banned items include surgical instruments, medicinal cotton wool, gauze, drugs including Aspirin, Disprin and Panadol, gold and gold sovereigns other than personal jewellery, camphor, petrol, diesel, shopping bags, polythene, plastic goods, guns, ammunition, explosives, gunpowder, toyguns, electronic toys, appliances including remote control devices, compasses, binoculars, maps, route maps, shoes, black shorts, sanitary towels, printing machinery, spares or other accessories, roneo machines and stencils, tools to repair machines, candles, barbed wire, steel wire, nails, timber, jute sacks, cement, electric stoves, wire cutters, cycle tyres, motor cycle tyres, motor cycles, motor vehicle spares, aluminium balm, shoe polish, brasso, school bags, newsprint and plain paper without ruler lines.

★ Interception of 'MV Sun Bird'

SRI LANKAN authorities are now seeking to cast doubt about the genuineness with which the LTTE made its offer and actual declaration of the unilateral ceasefire which came into effect on 1 January 1991. And they also seek to attribute a connection between the cease fire declaration and the interception by Malaysian authorities of the ship 'MV Sun Bird' with a quantity of weapons and crewed by 32 Sri Lankan Tamils.

According to the deliberately leaked 'findings' of the Sri Lankan CID, it would appear that the LTTE had purchased large consignments of military equipment consisting of rocket launchers, anti-aircraft weapons and ammunition in Europe and had made arrangements to transport them on the ship 'MV Golden Bird' which the LTTE had purchased on 20 October 1990. Because of the complications created by the Gulf War, another ship, the 'MV Sun Bird' which is registered under the name of 'Point Pedro Shipping Corporation' was used to transport a consignment of weapons from Singapore. The purchase which included speed boats, radio communication equipment, high-power outboard motors, walkie-talkies, under-water diving kits, camouflage uniforms and binoculars are alleged to have been effected by a person named Tharmalingam Shanmugam Kumaran identified as LTTE's logistical officer.

'MV Sun Bird' with the consignment and crew was intercepted and seized by the Malaysian authorities on 13 December 1990. Two of the three speed boats seized were fitted with three 150 HP outboard motors and the other had a high powered in-board engine fitted with twin props. In addition the seized consignment had eleven 225 HP engines, four 174 HP engines and three 115 HP engines and a radar set. There were also 15 under-water diving kits of the type used by frogmen together with four air compressors, 324 high frequency radio transmitters, 450 walkie-talkies, 26,000 rounds of ammunition and 43 night vision binoculars. Seized documents indicated the purchase of 7 rocket launchers, Browning machine guns and anti-aircraft weapon sights fitted with thermal imaging and they were to come on the 'MV Golden Bird'.

'MV Sun Bird' was captained by V. Jayapalan from Jaffna and had 23 crew members. Canagasabai Praisoody alias Captain David based in Singapore had been Marine Consultant for the LTTE and had been responsible for the purchase and loading of the ship 'MV Sun Bird' in Singapore. According to Jayapalan, Captain Praisoody had instructed him to sail to Nagapatnam in south India, from where arrangements would be made to get the cargo to the north of Sri Lanka.

The CID 'findings' further claim that Kumaran was the Director of a Malaysian export and import agency which he was using as a cover and was living in Malaysia. He was out of Malaysia at the time the 'MV Sun Bird' was intercepted.

★ Belated Realisation

'THE suppression of minorities and the denial of basic fundamental rights of the individual in any country, big or small, could lead to a major security threat to that state and perhaps even cause its destruction', the Minister for Education, Mr. Lalith Athulathmudali said at a public seminar held on 3 April.

Book Review

Inspiration in Verse

A purpose in pleasure or meanings through the enjoyment of song and verse – whatever these may be, Kopan Mahadeva has rendered in easy verse feelings that must be paramount in the hearts of thousands of Tamils in Sri Lanka as well as in far-off lands where they have sought refuge.

If tyranny is the mother of new hopes and creations, new vistas and opportunities, Kopan Mahadeva's poems speak loud and clear. Some are nostalgic, some magic, some inspiring and all of them remind us of our homeland in Sri Lanka – the land that we cherish and the land to which we will return one day.

Most of his poems in his collected work 'THE PEARLY ISLAND AND OLDER POEMS' speak of events, incidents and places that are fresh in our minds and they also underline the spirit, progress and the heroics of the community.

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In his poems Kopan Mahadeva with great passion gives a vibrant spirit to the Tamil cause and national unity and it is for political leaders of the country to hearken to these sacred verses and become truly inspired to lead Sri Lanka to the sane shores of peace and harmony.

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FIERCEST FIGHTING SINCE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Some of the fiercest fighting between government forces and the LTTE has been taking place since mid-March and reported to be continuing with greater intensity in north-eastern Sri Lanka. As the government imposed and reimposed round-the-clock curfews and the Sri Lanka airforce engaged in attacking LTTE positions, particularly in the Vavuniya, Mannar, Mullaitivu and Jaffna sectors, the LTTE also launched a series of counter-attacks involving many hundreds of their cadres.

The renewed army offensive began on 12 March to the north and west of Vavuniya in an apparent effort to secure the road-link from Vavuniya to Mannar in the north-west and Mullaitivu in the north-east free of Tiger control. Despite heavy aerial bombing, the army could not make much headway due to fierce resistance from the Tigers. The army's intended advance was halted with the killing of three soldiers and injuring of six more in a landmine explosion triggered off by the Tigers at Illukulam.

As the army was bogged down in its ill-fated Vavuniya operation, LTTE cadres using machine guns, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades struck at the army camp at Silavaturai located along the Mannar coast killing four soldiers and seriously wounding at least eight others on 16 March. The dead and wounded soldiers were part of an army contingent from the sixth battalion of the Gajaba Regiment. The same battalion last month (February 17) lost nearly fifty soldiers including two officers in a Tiger ambush. Just before the LTTE attack commenced, Prime Minister D.B. Wijetunga who is doubling up as State Minister for Defence in place of the assassinated Ranjan Wijeratne, had concluded his tour of the Vavuniya-Mannar region in the company of the military top brass.

In the Silavaturai attack, the troops were heavily outnumbered by LTTE's teenage cadres who were thrown into the battle in their hundreds.

Apparently in a diversionary move, LTTE cadres mounted a fierce mortar attack directed at the Elephant Pass army camp.

According to claims by security sources, 43 LTTE cadres were killed in two military operations codenamed 'Tiger Flush' and 'Blind Side'. The three-day operations which were completed on 16 March reportedly were directed against LTTE bases at Pulipanchakulam in the Thoppigala jungles, north of Batticaloa.

The LTTE resumed a major onslaught against the army camps at Silavaturai and Kokkupadayan on 20 March which continued for the next three days. It is reported that twelve busloads of LTTE cadres were transported from Jaffna to mount this attack. Army and airforce reinforcements which moved into the area are reported to have launched a series of counter attacks from the sea and air against well entrenched LTTE positions. 'A truck filled with explosives driven by a Tiger suicide squad exploded one hundred metres from the camp gates'.

An indefinite curfew was imposed by the government in the entire Mannar district and some adjoining districts following the LTTE attack. While the security forces beat off the attack against the Silavaturai army camp with the help of reinforcements and air cover after four days, the fighting at Kokkupadayan, two miles away, was reported to have been very fierce with casualties on both sides.

23 security service personnel were killed and 56 more were injured in these encounters. On the LTTE side, it was reported that over 125 teenage cadres were killed and over 250 of them who were injured were ferried for treatment at the Jaffna General Hospital presently run by the ICRC. The security forces had used helicopter gunships and SF 260 fighter bombers from the Anuradhapura airbase and naval craft including a Chinese built gunboat Super Dvora Fast Attack craft to attack the LTTE cadres. The gunboats fired barrages from their 37 mm and 25 mm cannon while the command ship used her 25 mm cannon and the Dvoras their 25 mm Oerlikons. The Silavaturai army camp is located 100 yards from the shore. Security forces later claimed that they found 115 bodies at Silavaturai and Kokkupadayan, many of them being those of male and female LTTE cadres in their early teens.

LTTE cadres made surprise attacks on army and police positions within the Batticaloa city limits during the night of 24 March. However the army with the support of air cover repulsed the attack. Fighting erupted when groups of Tigers infiltrated the town defences and started firing automatic weapons at the army camp occupied by the sixth battalion of the Sinha regiment, five police posts, the Batticaloa police station, the office of the Batticaloa Superintendent of Police and other state owned buildings.

On 28 March, the Sri Lankan army backed by air and naval gunfire support moved out of the Kankesanturai security forces camp in the Jaffna district and consolidated their positions west of the camp and south of Keerimalai. Security sources claimed that they killed eight LTTE cadres while two of their men were injured in this encounter.

Although the security forces claimed a 'crushing victory' against the LTTE during the battle for Silavaturai, the Tigers hit back against Sri Lankan soldiers on 29 March at Veppankulam, a small town few miles east of Silavaturai, when they attacked with massive force and numbers, an army unit conducting an operation south of the town. At least twentyfive soldiers including two officers were killed and 38 soldiers wounded, 15 of them seriously, who were airlifted to Anuradhapura first and then to Colombo for urgent treatment. Some soldiers, including two officers were reported missing. In a counter attack, security forces claimed to have killed scores of Tigers. The bodies of 23 soldiers killed in the Vappankulam encounter were handed over to the Navy by the ICRC on 3 April. The LTTE had exhibited the soldiers' bodies along with their casualties in Jaffna before they handed the bodies over to the ICRC.

In a surprise attack, security forces ambushed a contingent of Tiger cadres on 1 April between Karadyanaru and Chenkaladi in east Batticaloa killing seven and capturing their weapons.

In the Northern Jaffna sector, the Tigers began an attack on the Karainagar naval base on 1 March and five naval personnel were injured, but the attack was repulsed. However the Tigers resumed their assault on the naval base on the following days firing automatics, mortars and rocket-propelled grenades. Several soldiers

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and sailors were killed and the wounded were airlifted to the Anuradhapura and Palaly airbases. The Coordinating Officer of Jaffna Peninsula, Brigadier Wijaya Wimalaratne was also injured during the attack by the Tigers who also suffered many casualties.

In fierce gun battles between government forces and the LTTE, security forces claimed to have captured the Tiger base at Nanathan in the Mannar area on 5 April.

Eleven soldiers were killed and twenty more were wounded in a Tiger ambush at Panichenkerni in Vakarai, about 30 miles north of Batticaloa. The soldier victims belonged to the 4th Gemunu Watch of the Sri Lankan army. The Tigers had first launched missiles and then machine-gunned the soldiers who were badly outnumbered.

In the Mannar district, government forces numbering over two thousand began operations against alleged Tiger bases at Adampan and Pappamodai on 11 April. Airforce planes bombed and destroyed two trucks carrying LTTE cadres who were apparently abandoning their bases in the face of the advancing troops. Security forces claimed that the Tigers left behind large quantities of weapons and ammunition in bunkers linked by trenches.

As of 13 April, it was reported that thousands of troops were moving into the northern areas giving all the indications of a major offensive.

TULF asks Delhi to force Colombo to lift blockade

MADRAS

The TULF (Tamil United Liberation Front) M.P., Mr. Mavai S. Senathirajah, has appealed to the Government of India to pressure the Sri Lankan Government to stop its indiscriminate aerial bombardment of the Tamil areas on the island and also lift the economic blockade of the North.

'A calculated genocide of the Tamil people is under way in Sri Lanka using the absence of an elected Government in Tamil Nadu and the instability at the Centre', he said.

Mr. Senathirajah said that more than 5,000 innocent Tamils were missing in the Eastern Province since June 11 last year. They had been taken into custody by the Sri Lankan armed forces and the Muslim Home Guards under the guise of targeting and eliminating the LTTE. 'We are unable to trace them. Our fear is that most of these people have been killed. We have received hundreds of memoranda from the parents and wives of the people who have disappeared', he said.

More than 90 per cent of the houses of the Tamils in Trincomalee and Amparai districts in the East have been destroyed by the armed forces since June last. Their paddy fields have also been damaged. About 75 per cent of the Tamils were living as refugees in camps. But their safety was not assured even in the refugee camps because the soldiers and the Muslim Home Guards entered the camps and took away young people. Their parents and wives were unable to locate them. People from the urban areas had fled to the jungles where they were facing starvation.

Though Colombo claimed that it wanted to resettle the Tamils in their homesteads, the Tamils were not willing to go back as there was no security for their lives and property. 'In Trincomalee, under the guise of resettlement, more and more Sinhalese have been settled (in the Tamil lands)', Mr. Senathirajah said. The Sinhalese had been colonised even on Hindu temple lands. 'About 4,000 people have been killed in the last six months but nobody is interested', he regretted.

Colombo had also imposed an economic blockade of the North. Essential food items are extremely scarce. 'Our people are not in a position to earn. No office is functioning. Retired people cannot get even pension. Without food, electricity, medicines and milkfood for children, how can our people survive?' the TULF M.P. asked. He wanted India to step up its pressure on Colombo to stop its indiscriminate aerial bombing and force it to lift the economic blockade of the Tamil areas.

'Violation of Geneva convention'

The Tamil United Liberation Front has said the recent aerial bombing of Velvettiturai in the Jaffna peninsula by the Sri Lankan Air Force violated the Geneva Convention relating to internal conflicts, according to which neither civilian population nor places of worship nor property necessary for the survival of the civilians could be attacked. 'The deliberate destruction caused to Velvettiturai cannot be justified on any ground', it added.

The TULF central committee in a statement made available here, said it had received direct reports of indiscriminate and arbitrary bombing of civilian targets at Velvettiturai and Vavuniya recently. Recently about 300 barrel bombs were dropped on the town of Velvettiturai, destroying houses, temples, churches, shops and schools. About 200 houses were completely destroyed. Seven were killed and 20 injured. Although leaflets were dropped warning the people about the aerial bombing, the attack began two hours later and was accompanied by shelling from the Army camp at Palaly.

Two Sia Marchetti planes also dropped four bombs on the market at Pudukkudiyiruppu in Mullaitheevu district, killing 23 people. The market was situated adjacent to a refugees' camp and a first-aid point run by the Red Cross. Kokkuvil and Murugandy in the North were also bombed, killing and injuring civilians.

The TULF had consistently opposed the war in the North and East since the outbreak of hostilities in June last year.

USA 'Troubled by Human Rights Abuses'

The United States administration has earmarked Rs. 1.64 billion (US $41.1 million) in assistance to Sri Lanka for fiscal 1992. But in making its aid funding request the administration told the US Congress that it was 'also troubled by the human rights abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including government forces'.

'On human rights matters, the Government of Sri Lanka's primary responsibility is to vigorously investigate all extrajudicial killings and disappearances credibly linked to security forces and bring those responsible to justice', US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Teresita Schaffer told the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee on Asian and Pacific Affairs on Thursday.

In her observations on Sri Lanka, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State said:

'For Sri Lanka in fiscal year 1992, the administration is requesting 19.3 million dollars in Development Assistance, 21.6 million dollars in P.L. 480, and 200,000 dollars in International Military Education and Training funds.

'Sri Lanka embodies one of South Asia's starkest paradoxes. On the one hand, it takes pride in a strong, democratic tradition and dynamic economic policies which brought a five per cent

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annual growth rate for 1990. At the same time, Sri Lanka has suffered two brutal insurgencies. Although the JVP, which has a brutal record, was crushed by early 1990, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam continue to wage a bloody separatist war against the government.

Deputy Defence Minister, Ranjan Wijeratne, who was assassinated on March 3, was the latest victim of Sri Lanka's tragic cycle of violence.

'We have consistently urged dialogue, not bloodshed, as the means to resolve Sri Lanka's ethnic differences. While the ceasefire in early January did not last, we are encouraged that the government left the door open to future talks.

'We are also troubled by the human rights abuses committed by all parties to the conflict, including government forces. The government's establishment of a human rights task force was a welcome development. We commend its efforts to maintain communal harmony and to promote military discipline while fighting a violent insurgency. Plainly, a democratically-elected government has the right to protect itself from those who would overthrow it by force. Yet those charged with enforcing the law – including the Sri Lankan military and police – have a special obligation to obey it. On human rights matters, the Government of Sri Lanka's primary responsibility is to vigorously investigate all extrajudicial killings and disappearances credibly linked to security forces and bring those responsible to justice.

Beyond that, there must be greater effort to investigate officials linked to serious abuses. Discipline in the security forces must be strengthened. We have underscored this point on many occasions, including at the donor Consultative Group meeting in Paris on October 25. Other delegations, including the European Community, expressed similar concerns in their statements'.

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INDIA'S RENEWED ROLE SOUGHT

MADRAS

Former diplomats, journalists, academicians and Sri Lankan Tamil leaders have demanded that the Government of India return to its policy of lending its good offices for solving the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. They said India should give up its present 'isolationist, hands-off policy' on the events in Sri Lanka and they strongly advocated a federal solution within the sovereignty and unity of the island.

They were speaking on 'Emerging trends in Sri Lanka and India's options' at a seminar organised by the Centre for South and South-East Asian Studies, the Madras University, the Madras Chapter for the Society here for Indian Ocean Studies and the Island Trust, Coimbatore.

Mr. Thomas Abraham, former High Commissioner in Colombo, urged all the major political parties in India to mention clearly in their election manifestos that the resolution of the ethnic conflict on the island was of utmost importance. He pointed out that there were 2,30,000 Sri Lankan Tamil refugees here who should go back with honour and dignity. In August, 1983, Indira Gandhi had discussed federalism as one of the means by which the Tamil problem could be solved.

Coordination needed

Mr. K.P.S. Menon, former Former Secretary, said that during India's involvement in Sri Lanka, the various Indian agencies at work quite often did not know what the others were doing. This led to their pulling in different directions, which made for fuzzy objectives. If Delhi were to get involved again, it must ensure coordination among its various agencies. If negotiations were to begin, there must be a clear mention of federalism as the solution to the Tamil problem.

Mr. N. Ram said India cannot afford to remain a spectator to what was happening when the Sri Lankan Government was resorting to a 'barbaric' bombing of its own citizens (viz. the Tamils). 'Genocide cannot be allowed by either India or the international community', he said. Delhi must play its role, given the facts of its neighbourhood and the presence of refugees here, and must go into details of the merger of the Eastern province with the North, the portfolio of Land and Land Development, substance of executive and legislative power for the Tamils. It should go for a federal solution. 'As far as ethnic conflict is concerned, Eelam has to be redefined in federal terms and it has to be within the sovereignty and unity of Sri Lanka'.

Mr. S. Sivanayagam, Editor, *Tamil Nation,* said India's foreign policy under Mrs. Gandhi had a mind of its own and Colombo was always kept on its toes. If the present situation on the island continued, the Sri Lankan Government might reach a point where it could push itself into a dead end, politically, economically and militarily, leading to anarchy. Out of this chaos might emerge a solution that could satisfy the Tamil aspirations and give the LTTE an official recognition that India had so far denied. He regretted that between 1984 and now, India's policy towards the Tamil militancy had been one of drift and ad hoc approaches.

'Did not want to be cheated'

Mr. R. Sampanthan, former TULF M.P., said people should not jump to the conclusion that a major liberation movement would reject the federal solution out of hand. The militants, who were fighting for the Tamils, did not want to be betrayed (by Colombo) as the moderate Tamils had been. This is the reality that should be contended with. Since their armed struggle had entailed so much of sacrifices, they did not want to be cheated. He regretted that the Tamil struggle had been characterised as 'intransigent' and 'obdurate'. This was not true because Colombo had failed to deliver on its obligations.

Dr. V. Suryanarayan, Director, Centre for South and South-East Asian Studies, Madras University, said India's treating the ethnic crisis as Sri Lanka's domestic problem would be counter-productive. The door for negotiations with the LTTE should be kept open and if the LTTE genuinely subscribed to a federal State within a united Sri Lanka, India should play a benign role.

Mr. Thomas Abraham, journalist, said the present military situation was stalemated and neither the LTTE nor the Sri Lankan armed forces would be able to achieve a decisive military solution. Therefore, the search would begin for a favourable political solution.

Mr. S. Muthiah, historian, said the failure of developing countries to solve their socio-economic problems would see the birth of movements such as the JVP again and again.

THE INDIAN ELECTION SCENE

WANTING A WAVE

Mandal, masjid, stability. Each party has its own theme. Who do the voters favour? THE WEEK-MODE opinion poll

Yet another leader; any leader. Yet another patchwork arrangement; any arrangement. As long as they could continue to enjoy the plums of being an MP. After all, they had only just begun to taste the joys of being in power. Their appetites had not even been properly whetted by the brief time they were out on their rear.

The venerable Devi Lal perhaps did not realise the damning indictment of himself and his fellow politicians in his plea on the last day of the ninth Lok Sabha that the MPs be asked to vote on whether they were in favour of a mid-term poll. Fortunately, there was no provision for such a vote. The decision was the President's alone.

Politicians of all shades, shapes and sizes met the President in the days it took for Parliament to enact the essential legislative business and the President to announce his decision. They also met among themselves. Patch-up was the new buzz word.

Any means and anyone was acceptable as long as a 'patch-up' could be brought about. A strong reluctance to give up their perks so soon was behind all the desperation. But more compelling was their fear. Fear of having to go back to the electorate and explain why they were back so soon with their empty promises.

The President, however, finally left them with no other choice. But the departing MPs gave themselves a lavish parting gift – a hefty pay hike and generous increases in pensions and other facilities. They voted in greed, while weeping over the country's empty coffers.

So, clutching their self-gifts the MPs tremulously embark on two months of what could become rather embarrassing campaigning for many.

But then the voters are infinitely forgiving. And they have no escape from the elections. Even if they are sick of the charade, they will form snaking lines at the booth. For them, the ritual has become addictive.

This could well be one of the most divisive polls. For each party has its own pet theme to woo the voter. And each theme is designed to divide the electorate rather than integrate the polity.

For V.P. Singh, who has cobbled a broad front of communists and regional parties, 'secular and social justice' would be the theme song. That this social justice is based on division of society on caste lines is immaterial. To him, at least. And as a sop to regional parties like the DMK and AGP, which were dismissed by the Chandra Shekhar government, 'federalism' is an added issue, even if it promotes the growth of more regional parties.

The BJP is harking on Ram and roti. *Kapada* and *makaan,* one supposes,

Best suited to be PM

CHANDRA SHEKHAR	RAJIV GANDHI
26%	42%
V.P. SINGH	**L.K. ADVANI**
17%	11%

are understood. Its ambition now spans the country. Its promise is to usher in an era of 'genuine secularism'. Its plea is that it should now be given a chance as everyone else has failed. It is not against the minorities, it says. Hindutva, it argues, is not a bad word.

Chandra Shekhar's minions speak joyously of a Shekhar wave that will submerge everything else. His performance as PM has raised his standing considerably no doubt. But the credibility of his party and many of his ministers could not be any lower. And socialism is dead even in the land of its origin. So what will be Shekhar's theme song? No one knows as yet.

Which leaves the Congress(I) and Rajiv Gandhi, with their 'stability please' appeal. The irony is lost on a party which destabilised a government and that too on the most trivial of issues. Will it be lost on the electorate too?

As campaigning picks up, the new word to gain currency will be 'alliances'. In 1989, there were alliances in plenty, which saw a one-on-one contest in most constituencies. But this time, alliances seem as remote as the patch-up just before the dissolution. All the parties have vowed to go it alone and each is determined to secure its vote bank, no matter what it has to do to achieve that.

The stakes, after all, are the highest this time for everyone – their very survival.

To gauge the public mood at the starting post of this year's electoral race, THE WEEK commissioned MODE, an independent market research agency, to do a snap opinion poll in seven major cities: Delhi, Madras, Calcutta, Bombay, Bangalore, Lucknow and Patna. MODE interviewers spoke to more than 200 persons in each city in a random streetcorner sampling during March 10-13 to elicit their response to the fall of the government and expectations of the shape of things to come. And, most important, they were asked whom they would vote for if elections were held tomorrow.

In an earlier poll taken soon after Chandra Shekhar was sworn in as Prime Minister, a majority of respondents had said that the new government would not last more than six months. Their prognosis turned out to be only too true. The fall of the Chandra Shekhar government was greeted by most respondents with a sense of resignation. But the Congress(I) came off rather poorly for pulling the government down for the reasons it did.

Not surprisingly perhaps, 58 per cent of all respondents said that the Congress(I) decision to abstain from the Lok Sabha was wrong. Only 34 per cent believed it was right. The feeling

Cong(I) abstaining from Parliament

Right	34
Wrong	58
Can't say	8

that the Congress(I) had done wrong was the strongest in Madras (65 per cent), Bangalore (67 per cent) and Lucknow (61 per cent). Incidentally, in these capitals a government had fallen because of the Congress(I)'s manipulations or was under threat from it. The lowest figure was in Patna (45 per cent).

About two-thirds of the respondents approved of President R. Venkataraman's handling of the whole situation and the continuation of Chandra Shekhar as caretaker Prime Minister. Disapproval of the President's handling of the issue was the highest in Lucknow (46 per cent), while disapproval of Chandra Shekhar con-

Will any party get majority?		Which party will get majority?		Whom will you vote for?
YES	44	Cong(I)	66	40
NO	50	JD/NF	12	12
CAN'T SAY	5	JD(S)	9	11
		BJP	11	12
		CAN'T SAY	1	11

tinuing as caretaker Prime Minister was 47 per cent in Bombay, Madras, Bangalore, and Patna.

The man who has emerged with a far brighter image from the recent political developments is Chandra Shekhar. Possibly because not much was expected of him in the first place, Shekhar has acquired a new reputation, among the urban electorate at least. Over all, 51 per cent felt that his government's performance was better than that of the V.P. Singh-led National Front government.

Performance of JD(S) govt and Shekhar as PM

Better than VP govt/ expected	51	31
Equal to VP govt/ expected	25	38
Worse than VP govt/ expected	27	27
Can't say	3	

The Janata Dal(S) scored the maximum on this point in Delhi (70 per cent) and Calcutta (54 per cent). It got 39 per cent each in Bangalore and Madras and 46 per cent in Lucknow. The lowest score was in Patna (6 per cent), where the rival Janata Dal is in power. Only 21 per cent felt that this government's performance was worse than that of the previous one – the maximum being in Bangalore (41 per cent). And 25 per cent felt that it was equal – the maximum being in Lucknow (40 per cent).

It was his performance as Prime Minister that earned Shekhar the most approval. Over two-thirds felt that he had acquitted himself better than expected (31 per cent) or just as expected (38 per cent). Not surprisingly, 43 per cent of respondents in Delhi felt that he had performed better than expected, while in Bangalore only 19 per cent felt so.

Who is best suited to be Prime Minister? Believe it or not, the respondents rated Chandra Shekhar next only to Rajiv Gandhi, whom 42 per cent favoured. With 26 per cent on his side, Shekhar came well ahead of V.P. Singh (17 per cent) and L.K. Advani (11 per cent). Devi Lal scored a miserable one per cent. Shekhar's rating is all the more remarkable considering that in an opinion poll held in January, he had scored a woeful 4 per cent.

Shekhar's lowest scores this time were in the south – Madras (13 per cent) and Bangalore (14 per cent) – and the highest in the Marxist stronghold of Calcutta (38 per cent), followed by 30 per cent in Patna. Rajiv Gandhi scored 31 to 50 per cent in all the cities.

Surprisingly, V.P. Singh scored the maximum in Madras (37 per cent) and the lowest in Bombay (17 per cent) and Lucknow (6 per cent). In a similar poll over a year ago, V.P. Singh had scored over 40 per cent in Bombay. L.K. Advani scored the maximum in Bangalore (21 per cent) and Lucknow (28 per cent).

There is another interesting aspect to the respondents' ratings of these leaders: Chandra Shekhar, with his unkempt beard and all that, seems to have won the women voters' hearts. Consistently across all the seven centres, Chandra Shekhar and the Janata Dal(S) got better ratings from women than men.

Whether these ratings of the top leaders will translate themselves into votes remains to be seen. But it is obvious that all the others will need to do a lot of catching up with Rajiv Gandhi in the weeks ahead.

And their success in doing that will depend on what issues they highlight and how well these go down with the electorate.

As far as our respondents are concerned, the issues closest to their hearts are: Ayodhya (22 per cent), price rise (22 per cent), instability at the Centre (15 per cent) and the Mandal issue (13 per cent).

Expectedly, Ayodhya issue scored the maximum in Lucknow (37 per cent) and Bombay (28 per cent), and the minimum in Madras (11 per cent). Also, more people in Bangalore (21 per cent) as compared to Patna (17 per cent) rated this issue as important.

Mandal, not surprisingly, found the biggest following in Patna (31 per cent) and the lowest in Calcutta (7 per cent). Only 12 per cent in the national capital, where the anti-reservation agitation was immolatingly emotional, and in Lucknow felt it would be a major election issue.

Surprisingly again, despite the fall of two governments in less than six months, instability at the Centre was not cited as a major issue in any city except Madras (25 per cent). It was as low as one per cent in Lucknow. Also, very few felt that there was any threat to national unity.

Important campaign issues

Ayodhya	22
Mandal	13
Corruption	2
Unemployment	16
Price rise	22
Instability of Central govt	15
Threat to national unity	4

On the questions of who should ally or merge with whom, the respondents had very definite views. Forty-one per cent felt that the Janata Dal(S) should go it alone, 29 per cent felt it should merge with the Congress(I) while only 17 per cent would like it to rejoin the Janata Dal.

Citywise, 55 per cent in Delhi felt the Janata Dal(S) should go it alone, 35 per cent in Madras and 37 per cent in Bombay felt it should merge with the Congress(I) while 25 per cent each in Bangalore were for its merger with the Congress(I) and the Janata Dal. In Lucknow, where the government is headed by a Janata Dal(S) man, only seven per cent felt the party should merge with Janata Dal and 37 per cent wanted it to go it alone as compared to 31 per cent in Patna.

Preferred allies/mergers

	for	*against*
JD(S) and JD	16	70
JD(S) and Cong(I)	28	58
Left with JD/NF	33	53
Left with Cong(I)	16	70

As far as the left parties are concerned, 36 per cent felt they should

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remain neutral while 33 per cent were in favour of continuing the alliance with the Janata Dal-National Front. Only 16 per cent felt they should break away from the Janata Dal and back the Congress(I). In the CPI(M) citadel of Calcutta, 48 per cent felt that the party should remain neutral while 36 per cent felt it should continue to support the Janata Dal.

And finally, what do the people think would be the outcome of the general elections and who would they vote for? On the latter question, the Congress(I) led with 40 per cent overall. Coming way behind are the Janata Dal and the BJP (12 per cent each) and Janata Dal(S) with 11 per cent. The fall in rating of the Janata Dal has been rather precipitous compared to its standing a year ago. Its rating then was around 30 per cent.

Citywise, the Congress(I) scored between 30 and 50 per cent in all the centres – the maximum was in Madras (48 per cent), where the Janata Dal surprisingly got 31 per cent. The Janata Dal seems to be out of favour in UP, scoring a measly six per cent in Lucknow. Its best bet seems to be Bihar (22 per cent in Patna). The Janata Dal(S) scored the maximum in Delhi (16 per cent) and 15 and 10 per cent in Patna and Lucknow, respectively.

The BJP registered its best scores in Delhi (20 per cent), Lucknow (26 per cent) and Bangalore (21 per cent). In fact, the BJP seems to be consolidating its gains in Bangalore and Lucknow with Advani's personal rating being 21 per cent in Bangalore and 28 per cent in Lucknow. If the trend continues, it could well end up being a Congress(I) versus BJP fight in the two states which could hardly be good news for the Janata Dal and the Janata Dal(S). But these parties can perhaps take some comfort in that the cooling-off of the communal fires has affected the BJP's ratings. In December last year, 18 per cent of the voters we spoke to said they would vote for the BJP. Now the party gets just 12 per cent.

While 50% felt that no single party would get a majority, 44% ruled otherwise. And 66% of the latter felt the Congress(I) would win a majority.

On the election outcome, 50 per cent – Delhi scored the maximum of 63 per cent – felt that no single party would get a majority. But 44 per cent – with Bangalore scoring the maximum of 62 per cent – felt that one party would get a majority. And that party, 66 per cent of the respondents felt, would be the Congress(I).

Whether that actually happens only time will tell. But the preference of the voters on the kind of government they would like to see after the mid-term poll is starkly clear: 65 per cent want a single party government while only 33 per cent are in favour of a coalition government. Which perhaps was only to be expected after the rather disastrous experiments with two minority governments.

(Courtesy of 'The Week')

Tamil Militants end Hunger Strike

PUDUKOTTAI.

The hunger strike by about 150 Sri Lankan Tamil militants detained at Borstal School here ended after Mrs. Sheela Rani Chunkath, the Collector, held talks with them.

The demands of the militants were that they should be treated on a par with refugees and allowed free outing and instead of cooked food that was being provided to them they wanted rations given so that they could cook food in their Sri Lankan style.

During the talks it was given out that free outing impinged on policy and it had to be decided by the Government. If any of the militants wished to return to Sri Lanka their request would be considered and they would be sent back to Sri Lanka after getting permission from the Government.

Meanwhile nine Sri Lankan Tamil refugees were taken into custody under the Customs Act at Thopputhurai near Vedaranyam in Thanjavur district.

Official sources said that two VCRs and three gold biscuits were seized from them when they landed on the Tamil Nadu coast from Sri Lanka.

The sources said five Sri Lankan Tamil refugees staying in the Gopalasamudram camp were arrested in connection with the murder of Kadar Mohideen of Usilampatti in Madurai district. The man's head was found in a disused toilet at Munnerpalam in Tirunelveli district a couple of days ago.

Three women, suspected to be Tamil militants who were among those arrested on February 1 from a house in Gandhinagar in Adyar and detained in Central prison, Madras, were today ordered to be released on bail by Mr. Justice S. Janathanam in the Madras High Court.

The Judge said the three would be released on their executing a bond for Rs. 2,000 with two sureties each for a like sum to the satisfaction of the Vth Metropolitan Magistrate, Egmore.

The petitioners – Amudha, Mrs. Kalaimathi and Mrs. Kalaivani – stated that they were refugees and were staying here for the last five years. But following the change of Government they were arrested along with some others. Mrs. Kalaimathi and Mrs. Kalaivani submitted that they were pregnant and their detention was causing hardship to them.

The Hindu

Continued from page 4

drags on. In the city itself, civil administration has returned, but road blocks and check points are common.

Many buildings and shops have been burnt out and destroyed. Last year, when the army advanced, it was the turn of the Tamils to suffer; when the Tigers moved into town, it was the Sinhalese.

Trincomalee is unusual because large Sinhalese and Tamil populations live side by side. The Sinhalese, who dominate the government and the armed forces, are the majority island-wide, but a minority in the north and east, where the Tigers want to establish a separate Tamil-speaking state.

The city has always been an ethnic flashpoint, and many Tamils say a concerted campaign of Sinhalese colonisation has intensified in the last few months, to alter the ethnic balance and undermine the Tamils' claim to their homeland.

In better times, the city could easily boom once again. When Sri Lanka was called Ceylon, and was part of the British empire, Trincomalee was the Royal Navy's pride and joy. Situated on one of the finest harbours in Asia, it would be a natural centre for the export-based industries which the Sri Lankan government wants to develop to turn round the country's shaky economy.

But Colombo has grown tired of waiting for the war to go away, and development is now being planned around ports in the Sinhalese south. Nevertheless, if peace does eventually emerge, Trincomalee could be the engine which would drive a regional economic recovery.

For the moment, though, the city's economic infrastructure has been devastated – the port is little used, while fields in the surrounding area remain uncultivated. Refugees sit in their camps with no work, and little hope of a brighter future.

(Courtesy of 'The Guardian')

India's Sri Lanka Adventure

Lieutenant General S.C. Sardeshpande

Now that the last batch of IPKF has returned from Sri Lanka it is time that an in-depth stock is taken of its 32 month adventure there. Never before had the country experienced such differences in conception, viewpoint and reaction that came to the fore in the expressions of the people of different social milieus. Never before had the country's armed forces been subjected to such differing assessment, varying between accusation as known killers of Tamils and encomium as selfless soldiers who did their duty under difficult conditions. Never before had the country exclusively used its peace-keeping armed forces militarily as its sole instrument in a foreign country to achieve political objectives.

On its expense account are more than 1150 soldiers dead and double that number maimed and wounded, a total bill of millions of rupees spent to sustain the military adventure for 32 months, a good deal of poison injected into our own Tamil society and Indian polity, loss of credibility in the eyes of not only many other countries in the region but also among large sections of our own countrymen, and last but not the least, doubt in everybody's mind, specially in the armed forces', regarding what they set out to do and what they finally did.

On the credit side is the country's demonstraton that it is prepared to go to the military length it did in order to safeguard what it perceives as its security interest, followed by the display of its intent of not persisting mulishly in coercing its neighbour beyond a point, whatever the nature of that point and however brought about. All other so-called 'achievements' of IPKF, as mouthed by many politicians, intellectuals, analysts and professionals are only consequences. Achievements are designed, planned and pursued single-mindedly. Consequences are mere fallouts, incidentals, which are neither visualized nor planned for.

Therefore, a number of questions arise in examining this exercise.

★ Was a military adventure – use of military force against the Tamil darlings, the LTTE, unavoidable? Was India's security so much threatened in Sri Lanka by the Tamil – Sinhala confrontation that it became our 'vital National Interest?' (One definition of nation's vital interest is that it is an interest over which nations are prepared to go to war).

★ If it was so, was it visualized and accordingly planned?

★ What were IPKF's military aim and military tasks in Sri Lanka? What political aim were they designed to support? Did both adequately match?

★ Was the military instrument given the necessary other-than-military wherewithal to achieve its task in support of the political aim in a foreign country?

★ Was a thorough reappraisal carried out from time to time as military operations continued and political developments did not always keep pace, as was evident after certain landmark developments easily identified by the conduct of three elections and the Sri Lankan Government – LTTE collusion in June 1989? What type of organization was evolved at politico-bureaucratic-military level to study, visualize, plan and guide the IPKF involvement in Sri Lanka and how effective did it prove?

★ How effective was the IPKF in its operations in Sri Lanka? Did it measure up to the expectations of the Government, and people and professionalism?

★ Where does the effort of projection of national power stand in the scale of success?

Was application of Military Force unavoidable?

Here one must go to the genesis of the problem. That the Government of India and Tamil Nadu were exercised over the raw deal dispensed by the Sri Lankan Government to its Tamils, and Sri Lankan Tamils' struggle to find a place in the sun by resorting to violence and seeking shelter in Tamil Nadu, were well established and justified. That the disturbed conditions in Sri Lanka offered good scope to other countries to interfere and estabish focii of influence to the detriment of India's and regional security is unexceptionable.

That India's security interests as reflected in Sri Lanka's territorial integrity (i.e. Sri Lankan Tamils' non-realization of Eelam) and yet safeguarding Tamils' interests (i.e. Sri Lankan Government's acceptance of sharing power with the Tamils) were contradictory and hence extremely difficult is undeniable. Equally clear as daylight were the facts that the LTTE, the dominant Tamil militant faction and the most favoured one in Tamil Nadu and by the Government of India, was even so most intransigent, obstreperous and violently fascist in its ethos, approach and conduct, and that even so it was the most popular party with the Sri Lankan Tamils to whom Eelam had become an idea and LTTE a sentiment.

In this scenario, therefore, had the Government of India run out of all other avenues of effort to resolve the Sri Lankan Tamil issue? Indo-Sri Lanka Accord (ISLA) was an expedient agreed to by Sri Lanka as a life-saving device and India as a coercive instrument in favour of Tamils. Yet this pro-Tamil instrument fantasising its role turned against the Tamils – the LTTE in embarrassed pique! Can fantasy and pique become factors in deciding a nation's vital security interests that dictate going to war? If confrontation with LTTE it was to be, did it have to be 50,000 troops treading on foreign soil, when it was probably far more easy and less costly in every aspect (except perhaps prestige and image at home) to strangle the LTTE in Tamil Nadu and achieve the same goal? Couldn't the confrontation be managed through Sri Lanka forces and LTTE, by helping, and restraining, both so that both would learn the futility of seeking a military solution, though the realization would take long (probably in the same time frame that the IPKF too took ultimately)?

The impression one gathers is that the Government's decision to involve IPKF in a military response was hasty, avoidable, inadequately analysed, unstatesmanlike and weighed in favour of failure. Despite the availability of all the impediments of recent knowledge and experience of such interventions and possibilities of counter-insurgency the world over, one wonders what professional advice did the military give to the Government and how forcefully, and to what extent did the Government itself weigh the factors and the advice! One suspects that the Government and MEA ran out of ideas and the military showed itself rearing to go projecting outside!

Organization evolved to control the war

Little is known about the type of organization the Government of India evolved to study, visualise, plan and direct the difficult venture in Sri Lanka. Many newspapers have highlighted the cross-purposes at which the various agencies involved – IPKF, RAW, MEA, MOD, IB, MOH – were working, leave aside not working in consultation, to an agreed plan. One influential section, as articulated by the then Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka, justified military turnabout on the grounds that Sri Lankan Tamil realization of Eelam could set ofl sympathetic secessionist, non-secular, linguistic, theocratic and ethnic tendencies in Tamil Nadu to the detriment of India's integrity and unity, an

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idea as preposterous as fantasy can make it? Some papers have alluded to the personalized handling of the entire affair at the highest governmental level.

Three features typify the gross inadequacy of whatever organization was evolved for handling it. Firstly, the clearly visible confusion in identifying vital national security interests and military response to them as reflected in asking the peace-keeping force to start fighting, and fighting the very Tamils and their heroes, the LTTE, whom they went to help and the abominable lack of military preparation to start that war. Secondly, the painful lack of ideas and effort to exploit opportunities brought about by military operations and consequent political changes in the situation, as borne out by the inexplainable absence of political initiative after each of the three elections, and ending in the coup de grace dealt by Sri Lankan Government – LTTE talks to the Indian adventure. Thirdly, the ducks-and-drakes that started being played by the Government's apparent bankruptcy of ideas and policy, as epitomized in the dangerous jerkiness of halting/slowing/politicizing/recommending deinduction of IPKF's continued presence in Sri Lanka as a pressure point, without realizing that the continued presence of IPKF without any further operational aim and military defined tasks amounted to a mere physical pressure of the weight of so many thousand soldiers, progressively unwanted and hated by one and all in Sri Lanka.

That this would be the beginning of self-inflicted conscious destruction of the IPKF on foreign soil does not seem to have occurred to anyone, and is indeed the very limit of bankruptcy and hobnobbing with disaster. Part of this rush into folly was, as so many reporters have observed, the panicky step of arming and training bunches of unreliable riffraff of the EPRLF combine, which rightly, predictably and surely turned into a pathetic comic, whose brunt had to be borne, as reported in the Press, once again by the hapless IPKF which was only doing its duty as ordered.

Inured to its own peculiar brand of democracy, elections, political activities etc., the Government of India and its Sri Lanka policy makers obviously failed to take the 'people' in the North-Eastern Province in Sri Lanka into consideration, leave aside confidence. Alas, if they had gone to the people and made an effort to assess what they wanted they would have told that they wanted a type of democracy and election, if that was necessary, where the LTTE had a major role and participation, even if that democracy and election amounted to one party (read LTTE) rule.

Having lived in that milieu and suffered for so long they know what they wanted, and had little faith in or enthusiasm for the type of democracy and elections the Indian Government prescribed for them. If that is what the people wanted then who were the Indians and the IPKF to thrust something different down their throat? The big sin was that nobody went to the people. Even the former Indian High Commissioner was out of his depth when he once, and only once, spoke to the Jaffna citizens in late 1988 just prior to elections. Even the Indian Press failed to find out from the people as it fell prey to the hypnotism that the LTTE had always spread for it and to the valiantly frantic efforts made by the Indian Government (and the IPKF), in self-arrogated righteousness, towards its wrongly enthusiastic intent of bringing in its own brand of democracy among its assumed proteges in Sri Lanka.

No thought seems to have been given by the policy planners to India's vulnerabilities born out of limitations of its policy, latterly aided by its growing military muscle encouraging political ventures abroad in the region, India's desire and compulsion to maintain Sri Lankan territorial integrity thought to be so necessary for Indian and South Asian security is well understood by Colombo, which seems to be convinced that India can only go so far and no further in backing the Tamils against it.

The Sri Lankan Tamils know that they are the only agency through which India can retain its influence in Sri Lanka, and that other socio-cultural-religious-linguistic ties with Tamil Nadu can be fully banked upon for India's support in their just struggle for a place in the Sri Lankan sun. Thus India wants both but cannot have them on its own terms. These vulnerabilities are fully exploited by both. The Sinhalas have cared a tuppence for India's pressure beyond a point; the Sri Lankan Tamils and the LTTE have cocked their nose in 'ungratefulness' and disdain at India and the ugly Indians. One must discern their disillusionment under the skin of ungratefulness. In sum, since going to war with one party while grimacing at their opponent in Sri Lanka was apparently justified, unavoidable and the only solution as events have shown, was the policy-making and directing organization evolved by the government adequate, mature and responsible enough to advise the government to take realistic, wholesome and statesmanlike policy decisions?

How effective was the IPKF?

What were the IPKF's aims and tasks, and what resources was it given to achieve the same? While in any armed confrontation there is the political factor and the military factor, both of which have to go hand in glove, in a foreign intervention and counter-insurgency conflict politico-military combine assumes far greater relevance. Military operations have to be very carefully discerned and military tasks equally carefully framed by the Government. Both have to be constantly kept under scrutiny and control, and carefully orchestrated. In Sri Lanka one wonders what military aims and tasks were assigned to the IPKF!

The ambiguity and confusions are reflected in the contradictory, varying and absolute questions that have been asked of IPKF's operations and achievements. Why did it not succeed in disarming the LTTE! Why couldn't it fully marginalize LTTE? Why did it indulge in excesses? What kind of security environment does it boast of as having been brought about by it? How has it ensured Tamil security as it deinducted? Why did it arm and train the TNA and whom did that help? What did it achieve any way after its war for two and a half years and suffering so many casualties? These questions would have not arisen, or far fewer would have, if clear-cut military tasks, derived from the government's political goals, had been assigned. In any case when military force is used it means only one thing – killing and destruction have to take place.

War is not playing marbles, it is traumatic, it hurts badly, and hurts everybody including the innocent and the uninvolved. Barring GOC IPKF no one else has said that IPKF's was a politico-military task; a military formation being also given a political task. No clarification, if it was wrong, has come forth. No contradiction has been voiced – not even by the cognoscenti, the analyst and the Press. Is it not a mute witness to the ambiguity in the mandate given to the IPKF?

If politico-military mandate it was, was the IPKF then given the necessary other-than-military organizational and advisory wherewithal to handle such complex functions in the nation's power projection abroad? The answer is an emphatic no, because what was so clearly visible and has been reported accordingly is that all agencies were working not only uncoordinated but, worse, at cross purposes. It is unfair enough to give a politico-military responsibility to the military, but a bigger sin to deny to it the necessary wherewithal and coordinated backing of the other-than-military sphere. This has led to military officers foraying into politics of the whole adventure (despite Gen Kalkat's valiant efforts not to be seen as a political general), politician-diplomats playing the soldier (as the former Indian High Commissioner was prone to). But the biggest bane is that very substantially the people have not noticed the nuance,

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the Government has failed to resolve the ambiguity in tasking the military, and the military has failed to ask for it from the Government forcefully enough, predictably this affected IPKF's overall performance.

But that may not be the factor in the IPKF's performance in the purely professional field. Newspaper analysts have already exposed its being too conventional, its inability to adjust to the surroundings and type of guerrilla war, its handicap due to unsuitable weapons and language problem, and making the cardinal mistake of antagonizing the public. Most of the criticism is true. It is indeed strange, if not painful, to see Indian soldiery floundering in this manner despite its long acquaintance with counter-insurgency and jungle warfare for over three decades in north-east India.

There is also a Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School for imparting training. Should the finger rise at its weakness in fundamental training, motivation and cybernetics? Or at the large-scale eye-catching manoeuvres like Brass Tacks and Chequer Board which perforce impinge on unseen, mundane but vital fundamental training at unit level? Or at the absence of 'cause' and clear military aim and well defined military tasks?

A word about morale, which is a major factor in the soldier's performance. It is indeed true, as Gen Kalkat says, that there was no drunkenness, drugging, fragging, murder etc. in the IPKF, which is an indication of its high morale. That is fine. Soldiers have two levels at which their morale operates. Internally, from within the unit, and as a professional, the IPKF soldier seems to have done splendidly. He has discernible capacity to take punishment stoically, and give it back in ample measure. This ability does not seem to have diminished. Externally, he has had a very disturbing experience. Dispensations from eminent and responsible leaders like Karunanidhi, Gopalaswamy, Nedumaran, Krishna Iyer, Venkateshwaran et al; lionization of LTTE leaders in Tamil Nadu by way of open display of their posters even during local elections; public accusation of IPKF as killers of Tamils in Sri Lanka; people throwing stones at armoured vehicles in Madras as they were proceeding to the harbour; LTTE's threatening letters addressed to IPKF Tamil officers that their families would be exterminated in Tamil Nadu; sheltering of LTTE militants in Tamil Nadu, who would kill IPKF soldiers in Sri Lanka after getting medical treatment and collecting war-like material in their known camps strung along in Trichi, Madurai and Ramnad districts; and the general sullen and unsympathetic attitude discernible in the Tamil Nadu Government have made deep impressions on the soldier's mind. These, albeit, are democracy's fallouts.

The soldier has taken them in his stride. But how much of it he will put up with and how long he will remain unaffected require to be attended to shoving it under the carpet or dismissing it summarily as of lesser consequence will cost dearly in later ventures, of which he may not fight shy but will certainly be wary and withhold his best.

Winning the hearts and minds of people (Americans call it WHAM) is an important aspect in any counter-insurgency war. In Sri Lanka the people could not be won over by giving doles of medicines and rations, or repairing a few schools and places of religion. As highly educated, politicised and hardened sufferers, as the cheated and betrayed but proud people of Sri Lanka in search of their Tamil identity and legitimate right, their expectations were high and clearly beyond what IPKF could do for them. This was clear to even a novice. IPKF was waging a war over them, over their pride and sentiment and heroes. Which agency that kicks can win over the kicked, without compensating them? It is obvious that no resources of commensurate compensation were placed at the disposal of the IPKF by the government. Large scale visible reconstruction of the Tamil's prostrate economy and rehabilitation of thousands of uprooted families was the one and only compensatory activity that could have helped it win the people over. This never obviously happened; another cardinal blunder by the Government in not undertaking this economic reconstruction, and the military in not insisting on it!

How does the Adventure measure in the scale of success?

Neither did the Government think through the adventure and assign carefully evolved military aims and tasks, nor did the military apparently insist on it. The Government was wanting instant solutions, the military seemed raring to go. Neither did the Government provide commensurate wherewithal to the military, nor did the military demand it forcefully enough. The government and the IPKF set out to do something but could find only incidental fallouts, consequences, which are now being brandished as achievements. If only this was to be achieved, one wonders whether there was a need to go to war, and kill/wound so many soldiers, militants and innocent civilians. Our people, Press and intellectuals have apparently made little effort to realize that the military is not a machine but an organismic, living organization, and its utilization as a national (ultimate) instrument needs much deeper deliberation than has been displayed in these three years of Sri Lankan adventure.

There has been a great deal of bungling, wooden-headedness and what in American usage has come to be known as 'operating the levers of power' when ideas run out. The adventure has all along, right from the beginning, advanced under the shadow of failure in its perpetuation of folly. People like K. Subrahmanyam, tongue in cheek are pontificating with an air of robustness that there is no need for the military to be bitter about the misadventure. He quotes India's peace-keeping in the Congo etc., totally non-contextual and misleading. Such efforts from intellectuals and their illuminating blindness drive the simple soldier into the amnesia of praise and make him a fattened unthinking sacrificial goat. The British gave 'grog' to their soldiers and opium to the Nagas to keep them as efficient sacrificial warriors. The danger is that such innovations may drive the military into what Israeli historians call 'amoral familist'. It won't fight as well next time!

One hopes that the entire adventure including the IPKF's performance is debated and discussed in various fora and lessons drawn and correctives implemented so that we commit less mistakes and stop strengthening machines creating widows and post-humous heroes, and manufacturing military history.

(Courtesy Indian Defence Review)

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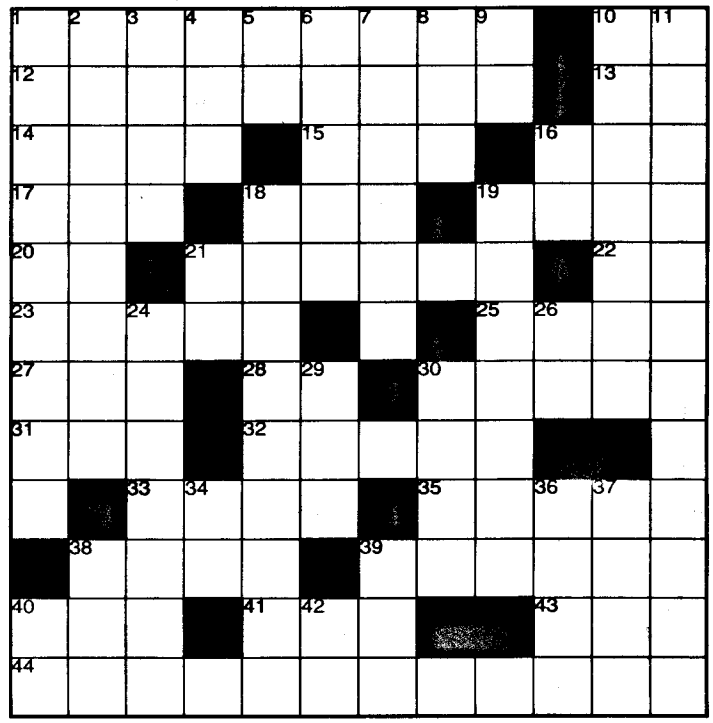
Across.

1. Agricultural and rehabilitation project of great repute on the northern mainland of Sri Lanka (12)
12. Large Amazonian serpent named with appropriately expressive combination of two Tamil words. (9)
13. Briefly a neighbouring state to Washington DC (2)
14. Eluvatheevu off Jaffna could be classed in this category (4)
15. Tiny piece of land on a river (3)
16. In Hinduism and Buddhism, a divine being (3)
17. Refers to maiden surname (3)
18. Cricket's citadel is a club with its headquarters at Lords (3)
19. —city, normal tension of a muscle at rest (4)
20. Autonomous Region (2)
21. Jaffna village famed for its bottomless well and garden products (6)
22. Steel-like metallic element used in colour television, briefly (2)
23. Inspiring symbol of a freedom movement (5)
25. Mimicked (4)
27. Strongest king of the West Saxons before Alfred who developed the most extensive legal code of the time (3)
28. Describes the nature and character of the state of Emirates in its official name, abb. (2)
30. Sayings on Vedic doctrines from 200 AD onwards (5)
31. Title of an archdeacon in the Church of England, abb. (3)
32. Prepare a person for a political career if not employ to care for horses (5)
33. Famous cheese (4)
35. Popular jungle shrine in northern Sri Lanka visited by people of all faiths and today a refugee camp for thousands of Tamils (5)
38. Grandmother affectionately (4)
39. Thin slice of bacon (6)
40. A national organisation with ties with a global body committed to peace (3)
41. These molecules carry vital genetic information (3)
43. Small constellation in the southern hemisphere near Scorpius (3)
44. An early agricultural and rural development hamlet in northern Sri Lanka (12)

Down:

1. Northern Sri Lankan island venerated by Hindus and Buddhists has historical, religious and cultural links with India (9)
2. Gooselike (8)
3. Valley (4)
4. In tennis a service too good for an opponent (3)
5. Scottish sweetheart (2)
6. Ordain or decree (5)
7. Orders proclaimed by authority (6)
8. One avenue tapped for funds by the British Chancellor to dull the Poll Tax pain (3)
9. Ancient Roman unit of weight (2)
10. Person bent on revenge for hurt done (7)
11. Historical centre of Hindu faith in Jaffna popularly associated with a princess cured of her equine face (12)
16. An osteopath's title (2)
18. Lord Ganesha reigns supreme in this jungle hamlet on the Jaffna-Kandy road (9)
19. The lot of Tamils in the hands of successive Colombo governments since Bandaranaike's Sinhala Only Act (7)
21. Potential energy, briefly (2)
24. Main features, not detailed (7)
26. Part of a school time-table for students (2)
29. A branch of military force (3)
30. Intoxicating juice of plant used in Vedic rituals (4)
34. Elected legal office in USA (2)
36. Popular lentil and a vegetarian's delight (4)
37. Greeks made her the wife and sister of Zeus and worshipped her as the Queen of the Heavens (4)
38. Oxlike antelope popularly called wildebeest (3)
39. Fled (3)
40. Lucknow is the capital of this Indian state which borders Tibet and Nepal (2)
42. Chemical symbol of sodium (2)



Quiz Crosswords – 1. Solutions and Winner.

Across: 1. Agastya. 8. Graf. 12. Godchild. 13. Ago. 14. Ed. 15. Ring. 16. Sapir. 17. Ampere. 21. Bureau. 23. Es. 24. Daleks. 26. Delft. 27. Dry. 28. Arb. 29. Ur. 30. Indus Valley. 33. Cur. 34. Aso. 35 Heart. 38. Spell. 40. Ararat. 44. Kids. 45. Tremble.

Down: 1. Ages. 2. Godavari. 3. A.D. 4. Scribe. 5. Thirukkural. 6. Yin. 7. Algae. 9. Rape. 10. Ag. 11. Forestry. 18. Madras. 19. Pueblo. 20. Refuel. 22. Rs. 24. DD. 25. Lynched. 28. Avatar. 31. Duels. 32. Mask. 36. Orb. 37. Ate. 39. Pi. 41. Re. 42. A.M. 43. AL.

Winner: Mr. Nagulan Neslah, P.O. Box 4708, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.

NEWS ROUND-UP

● **THREE POLICE OFFICERS** who faced charges of murder of lawyer Wijedasa Liyanarachchi, and who pleaded guilty to amended charges of conspiracy and wrongful confinement of the lawyer have been ordered to pay compensation of a total of Rs.80,000 and given suspended sentences by the High Court in Colombo. Superintendent of Police K. Dharmadasa was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment suspended for a period of ten years. Police Sub-Inspector H. Mendis was sentenced to one year's imprisonment suspended for a period of five years and Police Constable M. Dissanayake was given a suspended prison sentence of nine months.

● **MR. K. SRINIVASAN** has taken oaths as a Member of Parliament for the Jaffna district. He was nominated on behalf of the ENDLF to fill the vacancy created by the murder of Mr. Yogasangary of the EPRLF. Mr. Srinivasan has been a resident in the United Kingdom for a number of years before he returned to Colombo to take his oaths.

● **ABOUT 600 DISPLACED** university students from North-East Sri Lanka have been allowed to continue their courses in other Universities in the south of the island. The displaced students mainly belong to the Tamil and Muslim communities.

● **ELEVEN SOLDIERS** attached to the Thoppur Army Camp in the Trincomalee district were killed in a Tiger ambush preceded by a landmine explosion on March 9.

● **THE US GOVERNMENT** has made a grant of one million US dollars (Rs.40 million) through the International Committee of the Red Cross in Sri Lanka in response to the appeal for assistance of 13 million US dollars requested by the ICRC as donations.

● **TWENTY FIVE** Sri Lankan Tamil youths were taken into custody 'for questioning' at the Kattunayake Airport recently after they were deported by the Dutch authorities for having attempted to enter Holland with 'forged documents'. It appears that the youths had flown to Holland after paying Rs.100,000 each to a job agent in Colombo. But when the Dutch contact of the Colombo job agent failed to turn up at the Amsterdam airport, the youths were left stranded and Dutch immigration authorities deported them to Colombo. During the previous week, seven Sri Lankan Tamils, four men and three young women, were deported to Colombo by Indian immigration authorities when they landed at the Bombay airport from an Air Lanka flight.

● **OVER 125 UNIVERSITY** students are continuing to be held in detention for the past 18 months according to the University Grants Commission. These students who were taken into custody by the police and security forces as part of the crackdown against the JVP have not been charged with any offence and there are no indications they would be released in the near future.

Madras Launches ASIA

Saturday 6 April 1991 was a day to be remembered with great delight particularly for youngsters Nalini Balakumar, Nirupa Murugaesu, Aparajita Nandipati, Anjali Perinparajah, Tina Taventheran, Dharini Mahendren, Shalini Balakumar, Threeya Tharmendiran, Sisha Sriskandarajah, Thanuja Sriskandarajah, Meera Sivasubramaniam, Davina Rishmi, Nadine Thangi Rathindran, and Sharmini Sivasubramaniam.

On this day they went on stage as very promising fledgling young people under the auspices of the Music Academy of Dance Rhythms and Songs (MADRAS) which launched their Academy of South Indian Arts (ASIA), a new organisation making even more impact of Indian culture on the western front.

During the first part of the evening's recital, the children after the traditional invocatory obeisance dedicated to Lord Ganapathy performed two pieces with great ease, charm and grace. The first one was Jathiswaram in the Malayamarutham raga set to adi thala which is a rhythmic dance of complicated foot movements. This was followed by a dance extracted from the famous ballet Kutrala Kuravanji titled Pandattam and rendered in a variety of ragas, again in adi thala. The nattuvangam and vocal support were given by the founder of ASIA, Lakshmi Ganeson and Srimati Mathini Sriskandarajah.

The principal of MADRAS, Karaikudi Krishnamurthi, one of India's foremost musicians and dance teacher headed the rhythmic ensemble on the mirudangam along with his students Sri Peter Lockett, Selvan Soruban Sarvanantar and Selvi Kavitha Thevarajah. Sri Thiruvarur L. Kothandapani and Srimati Kamala Pathmanathan accompanied on the violin and flute respectively.

A household name wherever the fine arts are appreciated in India, Malaysia and Singapore, Karaikudi Krishnamurti during his brief period since assuming principalship of MADRAS has made a great impression in London. His encouragement to many young people seeking proficiency in these arts and his total dedication to it was touchingly expressed when Lakshmi Ganeson paid her obeisance on the stage not only to the divine art of dance and music and the presiding deity but also in the finest traditions of learning, to her guru Krishnamurti.

Karaikudi Krishnamurti's recent composition from the epic Nala-Damayanti was acclaimed in Singapore and was broadcast in three parts in that country's television.

Lakshmi Ganeshon an engineer by profession and whose dedication to the dance culture of Bharata led to the founding of ASIA took the stage after the intermission with Alarippu a traditional introductory dance and then Varnam in the Sankarabarana raga. It was the piece de resistance of the evening's programme for which the lyric was composed by Raji Narayanan and the music by Karaikudi Krishnamurti.

It is a colourful and elaborate dance that combines pure and interpretative movements in equal measures in alternating tempos. She followed this with a dance in praise of Lord Siva describing his many faceted form and his divine form. Titled Adal Kalai and rendered in the Abogi raga, this dance was composed by Adyar Balu. The final event was the Thillana in Sindhubhairavi which was another composition of Karaikudi Krishnamurti.

The Commonwealth Institute event was graced by Mr. and Mrs. C.J.T. Thamotheram as chief guests, Ms. Nahid Siddiqui an exponent of the Kathak dance as guest of honour and a large number of patrons of the art, friends and relatives. ASIA no doubt breaks new ground and Tamils in the United Kingdom are privileged to have the services of people of the stature of Mr. Krishnamurti.

Sujithra – Subathra: Veena Arangetram

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Lord Mountbatten Hall on the evening of Sunday, 6 April, 1991 wore a festive look of a well-planned Arangetram. The hall was nearly full well before the start of the function and crowds started forming on the sides despite arrangements made for showing a live video of the programme at the adjoining Hathi Hall. As the curtain opened, the two budding artistes Sujithra Ambikapathy and Subathra Ambikapathy were seated with their Veenas along with their Guru Sivasakti Sivanesan, and accompanying artistes Somasundaram on Mridangam, Muthu Sivarajah on Gangira and Tabla, Sithamparanathan on Moresing, Balaskanthan on Ghatam, with Yasodara and Devaki playing the tambura. A picture of Goddess Saraswathi playing the Veena constituted the backdrop and at the front corner of the stage stood a Vigraha of the same Goddess with fruits and flowers placed nearby, as visible marks of the Aramba Puja. Indeed Veena in the hands of Saraswathi is supposed by hoary tradition to represent Brahma-Vidya or the bliss of spiritual knowledge; and as sage Yagnavalkya postulated, one who knows how to play the Veena correctly, with knowledge of Sruthi, Jathi and Thala, easily attains salvation.

The programme started with a Varnam in Raga Kamboji which was rendered well in both the Kalas. Sri Maha Ganapathe in Nattai which followed, was noted for its well-blended orchestral effect and its sparkling swaraprasthara; indeed Maharajapuram Santhanam, the chief guest, who was the first to popularise the song, made a special mention of the artistes' rendering of the song in his address which followed. Thyagaraja's Dudugugala – a difficult piece for beginners – was played as it should be, and helped to convey the philosophical message the saint intended, namely that the rare human life should not be wasted in pursuit of material values. The next piece of Shyama Sastri revealed the artistes' control of misra chapu tala. Parithanamichithe in Bilahari was briskly played. The Dharmavathi raga was handled well, despite being an innately difficult raga to play. The Ragam, Tanam, Pallavi in Hindolam, set to Tisra Triputa by Sivasakti, was the most complicated item of the evening and was competently rendered.

The Ranjani Mala was very sweet to hear while Kunjaran Sodara in Amritavarshini was liltingly portrayed. Two unscheduled items, namely Bharatiyar's Thondru Nigazhnda and a Meera Bhajan added to the variety of the items presented. The programme concluded with Lalgudi Jayaraman's Thillana in Madhuvanti.

The accompanying artistes showed a great understanding in providing appropriately soft accompaniment to Veena and built up noteworthy intricate patterns during their Thani Avarthanam.

'Arangetram' is an age-old concept where a Guru presents his or her students at their maiden stage performance for approval by the discerning audience of their attainments. Did Sujithra and Subathra pass this test? They did, indeed, judging from the approbation of the audience. I, for my part, wanted to apply one technical test: the test of the 'gamaka'. Sarangadeva has defined the gamaka as 'the shaking of a note which pleases the hearer' and gamakas have been evolved over the ages with the help of the time-honoured instrument, the Veena. I found that the two youngsters fared well in this test and mentally wished them all the best for their future.

P.P. Kanthan.

THE LAMENT OF THE TAMILS

Shoulder to shoulder for freedom we fought
Brothers in bondage the same goal we sought.
Tamil and Singhala united we stood
And gained independence – so far it is good!

The aliens have drifted apart from our shores
But sunk are we now in our desperate woes,
And gone with them too is our peace and our calm,
Our dreadful plight now is a cause for alarm.

Democracy in Lanka is majority rule,
To stand for our rights we ployed every tool.
Debated at length and argued our cause,
For minority rights we cited the laws.

Failing we organised demos so passive,
Rallied in millions in mobs e'er so massive.
The answer was violence egged on by the state,
The volcano spewed forth the lava of hate.

Emerge did our Tigers from rank and file
To cheer the downtrodden, to bring back the smile.
Though thousands did perish, the challenge goes on,
Never say die, 'till the battle is won.

Ravaged and savaged dear Eelam our home,
Tamils by hundreds are scattered and roam
As destitutes vagrants with loved ones all gone,
Bed of nails for the night, no hope for the morn.

Is there no end to this inhuman plight?
Years rolling by, no solution in sight.
The lethargic world: won't it wake up and heed
The incessant cries from the dear hearts that bleed?

Saras Rajaratnam.

UNITED NATIONS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

SRI LANKA FLAYED FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

(Continued from last issue)

Liberation

The following is the text of the intervention by Liberation:

'If we take Sri Lanka into our focus the plight of detainees in the North-East Province of Sri Lanka continues to deteriorate rapidly. Occupation by the Government Forces of small areas of territory in the North implies automatic detention of its residents as is evidenced by the statements of the Catholic Bishop of Jaffna in a situation report dated October 1990, where he says, "Towns and villages taken by forces are considered to be slaughter houses where innocent civilians are killed inside the church".

In the Eastern Province where the Government occupies a narrow coastal strip and the sections of Amparai, the situation is worse still. Four thousand of the six thousand deaths that have occurred within the last six months have occurred here.

We quote below some examples of the fate of those who were arrested and detained by Government forces or held in Government refugee camps.

On September the 7th last year 25 Muslim refugees were seized from a Mosque in Pulmottai in Trincomalee district. Three were killed. The fate of the rest is unknown.

Ten days later the army and Muslim Home Guards hired by the Government seized 35 Tamil youths from Sorikalmunai, took them to the Savalakadai army camp in the Eastern Province and shot them dead.

On October the 25th the Army killed 25 Tamil refugees in the Clappenburg refugee camp after abducting them to a nearby jungle in Trincomalee district.

On December the 6th, 76 Tamils were arrested, taken to the Neelavanai army camp in the Batticaloa district where they were tortured and killed.

Rapes have also been a common feature in such arrests'.

INTERVENTION BY COUNTRIES

The following are extracts from interventions by delegates representing several countries:

On behalf of 12 Members of the European Community:

'The European Community is extremely concerned about the human rights situation in Sri Lanka, in particular with respect to disappearances and extra-judicial executions. The Community welcomes the Sri Lankan authorities' decision to grant the Working Group on enforced or involuntary disappearances access to its national territory in September 1991. We recognize the difficulties facing the Sri Lankan Government in coping with the civil war raging in the country. We are, however, alarmed by reports that death squads and other groups are indulging in extortion and killing. There have been allegations that these groups are organized by, or at the very least, enjoy the tacit support of the Sri Lankan authorities. The Twelve call on the Sri Lankan Government to respect human rights even in the course of operations to maintain peace and order. In this connection, the Twelve were disturbed by the way in which citizens wishing to submit documents of denunciation had been obstructed, in violation of Resolution 1990/76 of this Commission. Against this background, the Twelve condemn all intimidatory or retaliatory measures against Sri Lankan citizens.

The Community welcomes the setting up by the Head of State of a special working party on human rights and hopes that its work will produce concrete, objective results. The European Community calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to do everything in its power to ensure that the humanitarian activities of the ICRC and Médicins Sans Frontières can be carried out under the best possible conditions'.

Netherlands

'The report reserves quite a few pages for a situation that deservedly has preoccupied the Group for a number of years already. I am referring to the situation of disappearances in Sri Lanka. In fact, the whole of the human rights situation is of continuing concern to my Government. We appreciate that the Sri Lankan Government is co-operating with the Working Group and that a visit has been planned for the summer of this year. By contrast, in September last year, Sri Lankan authorities confiscated over 500 reports on disappearances as well as other documents and photographs which were supposed to be given to the Group. The Group rightly protested to this, while referring to resolution 1990/76, which as members are aware, not only deals with the question of **access** to human rights procedures but also with **reprisals.** Even though most of the documents were returned to the Group, the fact itself remains reprehensible. Hopefully, the Group's visit to the country will not be marred by any similar deficiencies'.

Canada

'Canada is most perturbed that there has been no lessening of hostilities in Sri Lanka over the past year and that violence continues at a very high level. Little has been done by the government over the past year to apply new initiatives to resolving the situation.

Canada deplores the continuing appalling human rights situation in which it is apparent that civilians have been indiscriminately bombed and attacked by government forces and by secessionist forces. We urge the Government of Sri Lanka to exert all possible efforts to bring about a cessation of fighting and to open a dialogue process leading to a negotiated settlement and a durable and equitable peace. Canada calls upon the government to ensure that its forces give serious respect to the safety and human rights of civilians, and that the distribution of food, medicine and shelter is in no way hindered'.

Australia

'For many years there has been a tragic cycle of violence in Sri Lanka which has brought harrowing consequences to its people, of all ethnic groups. While the causes of the conflict are complex, no level of hostilities can excuse human rights abuse by any of the parties involved. The suffering and loss of life caused among the Sri Lankan population by the current fighting in the north of the country is particularly appalling.

We welcome some recent developments, including the invitation to the Commission's working group on disappearances to visit Sri Lanka, the setting up of an independent commission of enquiry into missing persons and the appointment of a special task force to report direct to the President on violations of human rights. We hope these measures will be effective. We also hope for an early political settlement for Sri Lanka's problems, under which its people will be assured full enjoyment of their human

Continued on page 22

Continued from page 21

rights. Australia will continue to take a close interest in the situation in Sri Lanka'.

Sweden

'The security situation in many parts of Sri Lanka continues to give rise to widespread violence against civilians, frequent disappearances and other human rights violations. All efforts must be made to restore full respect for human rights and to create an environment conducive to peace. We have noted that the Government of Sri Lanka recently has established a Commission on Human Rights. We will closely follow its work'.

United Kingdom

'Praise is due, and should be given by this Commissison, to those Governments which have cooperated with the Working Group: especially, perhaps, to those Governments which have arranged visits by the Group to their countries. In this connection, we particularly welcome the projected visit by the Group to Sri Lanka, where the problem of disappearances has, unfortunately, been painfully acute and where one particularly blatant case, which occurred during last year's session of this Commission, has troubled many of us deeply. We look forward to the Working Group's report on that visit being before us next year'.

Sri Lanka's Response

The following is the text of the intervention by way of reply by Mr. Bradman Weerakoon, the head of the Sri Lankan delegation:

'Cooperation with the United Nations bodies dealing with human rights has been a consistent and long-standing policy of Sri Lanka. We have voluntarily provided information and funds, within modest means available to us, to United Nations efforts in this regard. We intend to continue to pursue this policy.

Mr. Chairman, in the past two years particularly, Sri Lanka has had to cope with two interlocking crises – one in the South and the other in the North. In the South, the violence of the JVP challenged the established systems of democratic Government. In the North the militant LTTE sought to establish a separate State through the force of arms and threatened the unity and integrity of the nation. The challenge for Sri Lanka was how to deal with these twin threats to its structure, and to its democratic mode of functioning, whilst still maintaining and protecting the human rights of all its citizens.

I shall attempt, in the few minutes at my disposal, to make three points. **Firstly,** to set the context in which the Government was compelled in 1989 and 1990 to move resolutely against armed attempts to destroy both democracy and the unity of Sri Lanka. Most of you distinguished delegates know the facts. In both instances, the action of the Government was **reactive** to deal with a critical situation which had arisen. The primary objective was the peaceful resolution of deep-seated grievances. In this spirit, the Emergency was lifted in January, 1989. 1,500 JVP detainees were released and the JVP invited to the negotiating table.

But these moves were of no avail.

The JVP misinterpreted the Government's preference for a peaceful solution as a sign of weakness and sharply stepped up its campaign of violence and intimidation. They were responsible for thousands of murders. The victims included people perceived as 'traitors', prisoners, security services personnel, and their families, members of political parties, voters at the Presidential and Parliamentary elections, senior public officials, media personnel, Buddhist monks and left-wing Opposition activists. They called strikes, threatened to murder those who refused to participate, destroyed Government offices, Tea factories and a great deal of State property.

Normalcy has now been restored in the South and civil society re-established. But the restoration of peace has inevitably had its costs. Many service personnel and insurgents lost their lives in combat. Several thousands of young JVP activists had to be detained. Of the original 14,000 taken in, 3,000 have been released, around 5,000 are undergoing community-based rehabilitation, and about 6,000 are in detention awaiting trial through the normal courts system. The Government is also determined to take firm action against vigilante groups and individuals who may have been indulging in reprisal killings. We have set in motion an economic regeneration process to deal with the root causes which contributed to the insurgency.

In the North, the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) had since 1987 been attempting to disarm the LTTE in terms of the Indo-Sri Lanka Agreement. That struggle cost the lives of over 1,500 Indian soldiers, thousands of LTTE cadres and the lives of many thousands of Tamil civilians. Even before the departure of the IPKF, the Government had taken the bold step of opening negotiations with the LTTE unconditionally, with a view to a peaceful settlement. However, the optimism and hope which my Government reflected at the last session of the Commission were shattered on 11 June, 1990 by the unprovoked attacks on Police Stations, the surrender of over 800 Policemen and the eventual murder of most of them by the LTTE. Once again in the face of terror, the Government had no other alternative but to respond firmly to deal with the challenge to the integrity of the State, the disruption of essential services and the threat to citizens of all communities. So, regrettably conflict rages again with tragic loss of life to combatants and immense suffering of civilians – Tamils, Muslims and Sinhalese.

The **second** point I wish to highlight is the **accountability of the Government to the people** for the actions it has had to take. This accountability is ensured through the democratic mechanisms that have long been a part of the Sri Lankan polity and society. For example:

★ The National Parliament elected in 1989 on the basis of Proportional Representation debates monthly the continuation of the Emergency;

★ The Press, both local and foreign, continue to report news uncensored. Foreign correspondents are free to travel around the country and report;

★ NGOs like the Bar Association, the Civil Rights Movement, the Mothers' Front, the Churches, Citizens' Committees, etc. freely ventilate issues relating to alleged violation of human rights;

★ A Committee of Parliamentarians has been active over the last two years highlighting issues relating to human rights.

★ A vigilant international community headed by Sri Lanka's aid donors regularly reflect their concerns to the Government;

★ The Supreme Court has initiated action to hear Fundamental Rights violation pleas of persons in detention camps. Habeas Corpus applications are today before the Court of Appeal. An amendment to the Constitution to expand and strengthen Fundamental Rights has been placed before Parliament last December;

★ A Human Rights Task Force composed of senior public officers is monitoring the prosecution of cases against those charged with excesses in the performance of security duties;

★ The ICRC, active in Sri Lanka since November 1989 is helping to trace missing persons. It also monitors those in detention by regular inspections of detention centres and Police Stations. The UNHCR also has a presence in the country.

★ In January, an Independent Commission of Inquiry of retired Supreme and Appeal Court Judges was appointed to look into cases of alleged disappearances;

★ Peace Committees have been set up throughout the country bringing together the Police, the Temple or Church and the School, so as to inculcate in people respect rather than fear of the law;

★ In 1991 the UN Working Group on Disappearances will visit Sri Lanka. The Government has also decided to invite the Special Rapporteur on Summary or Arbitrary Executions to visit Sri Lanka during the course of this year.

My **final** point is about the situation in the North which has been referred to by several speakers. The conflict that is now on is not against the Tamil people but against the LTTE. This militant group well armed, well financed especially from abroad and committed to 'Tamil Eelam', a mono-ethnic separate State, continues its guerrilla warfare against the Government. Following the temporary ceasefire at the beginning of the year, the Government has called upon the LTTE to resume talks with the Government:

– Such talks would be with the leader of the military wing of the LTTE.

– Talks should be preceded by a declaration against the possession and use of arms by any group or persons other than those authorized by law.

– All political parties including the six Tamil parties now in the All Party Conference (APC) would be invited to participate in such talks.

If the invitation for talks on these terms is accepted by the LTTE, the Government has stated that it would be prepared to suspend offensive operations against the LTTE. The Government has also called upon the LTTE to release all hostages they are holding, to stop recruiting for combat young boys and girls, to stop acts of extortion and terrorisation of civilians as a means of obtaining their support, and to allow humanitarian access to all prisoners in their custody.

Unfortunately, the LTTE perhaps uncertain of the political support it can obtain prefers to pursue its goal through violent means.

In the meantime, within the APC, six Tamil parties and two Muslim parties representing the 32% Muslims in the East are working out proposals for power sharing in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. These arrangements also contain recommendations for increased devolution of powers to the Provincial Councils. So, along with the strategy of militarily weakening the LTTE, there is also unfolding a viable political option, whereby peace and normalcy may once again be restored in northern and eastern Sri Lanka'.

REFORMER AND THE REVOLUTIONARY

The great South Indian poet Subramanya Bharatiar spoke of Tamil language as the sweetest of all tongues but to his sishya, Bharatidasan, who admired him ardently and whose birth centenary is being celebrated this month, Tamil was his very life.

Born in Tamilnadu on 29 April 1891 and revered today as poet, reformer and revolutionary and one who came deeply under the influence of Periyar's social reform movement, Bharatidasan took his pen-name while being a sishya of Subramanya Bharatiar. He held him in great affection and reverence.

A number of his poems underline his depth of love for Tamil and he advocated that this treasure house of great wisdom shoud be translated into many languages for the good of humanity. 'My mother the sweet Tamil' he sang in one and emphasised: 'To render in numerous languages, behold the world longs'.

The revolutionary that he was, he used his gift of song and verse as a vehicle to move the masses against the prevailing social evils and to propagate the Dravidian traditions. He held definite views on vital areas of life and expressed them in his works with clarity and conviction.

During his involvement in the freedom struggle some of the ideals that he stood for changed, particularly in respect of the khadi movement and religion, but he remained at all times a strong crusader against social evils especially those affected by caste, poverty, economic injustices and exploitation of all kinds.

A strong democrat, Bharatidasan believed a socialist system as one that was needed to liberate the masses. He underlined the frustrations that caste observations caused in his poems and in one sang: 'Since in our land three crores of people and the difference among them will equal that number'.

Again he sang: 'I have endeavoured to pull down the trammels of caste, fought meanness in all its forms. I have always done what I hold good. I have never been afraid of adversaries'.

Bharatidasan was well ahead of time in respect of women's liberation. He expressed his feelings and convictions in the strongest possible terms.

A nation's freedom was worthless if the women did not have their own freedom he said in his poems. He also advocated the re-marriage of widows with the same intensity the great Mahatma Gandhi had for this cause. The working class too figured very highly in his concern for their freedom and welfare. He identified himself in their sufferings and privations and in one poem he cried to the high heavens thus:

'Oh earth are you not standing proof
Of the tireless toil of the working class
How is it that the rich are callous
To the hunger of the labourers?
The workers will all arise
And will prove to the world
That their strength will bring them life.

In recent years two movements that have had their great impact on the Indian subcontinent were the freedom struggle and the fight for the liberation of the downtrodden castes from their age-old shackles.

Bharatidasan's writings and poems were all dedicated to these and the renaissance of Tamil heritage. He sang tirelessly the glory of the Tamils, the greatness of their language and the richness of their culture.

The late C.N. Annathurai, under whom Bharatidasan became enriched in the rudiments and concepts of the Tamil language, paying tribute to his contribution to Tamil, said that Bharatidasan like western poets made art the mirror of his time. He wished that his poems would flourish and spread. Tamilnadu's former chief minister, Dr. M. Karunanidhi referring to his works that helped the growth of contemporary Tamil literature said that he made his poems the custodians of rationalism. 'The word Bharatidasan', Dr. Karunanidhi added 'no longer denotes an individual but an inexhaustible treasure of Tamil pleasure'.

Dr. R. Niththyanandan.

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U.S. citizen, *mid 40, divorced professional, seeks educated sophisticated East, West, cultured lady. Returnable photograph appreciated. M 474 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek qualified partner under 30 for attractive daughter, 23, B.Sc (USA), employed, preferably doctor, accountant. Details, horoscope to M 475 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu Tamil doctor in Australia, *seeks preferably qualified partner for her professionally qualified brother in late thirties, teetotaller, homeowner, British citizen in health services. Details and horoscope to M 476 c/o Tamil Times.*

Friend *seeks educated Christian bride for professionally qualified, Tamil bachelor, 26, residing in Australia. M 477 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu brother *seeks qualified bride for brother, engineer, 31, UK resident employed in London. Send horoscope, details to M 478 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu sister *seeks fair and attractive partner for accountant brother, 33. Send details, horoscope with photograph. M 479 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek partner for their only daughter, engineer, 30, Peradeniya Campus. Details to M 480 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu doctor *seeks professionally qualified Hindu Tamil for his accomplished, pretty, graduate daughter, 24, British citizen. Apply with horoscope, returnable photo. M 481 c/o Tamil Times.*

WEDDING BELLS

We congratulate the following couples on their recent marriage.

Dr. Rajaram *son of Mr. & Mrs. Kandasamy, 'Kantha Kottam', Pulolly East, Sri Lanka and* **Dr. Srisujanthy** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. A. Veluppillai, 'Sri Akam', Siruppiddy North, Sri Lanka on 10.2.91 at the Armenion Banquet Centre, Scarborough, Canada – Unit 15, 270 Timberbank Blvd., Scarborough, Ontario M1W 2M1, Canada. Tel: (416) 756 0794.*

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Jegathkumar *son of Mr. & Mrs. S. Kandasamy, 57 Pretoria Road North, London N18 1EU and* **Anuratha** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. P. Theivendran, 61 The Ridgeway, Kenton, Middx. HA3 0LW on 27.3.91 at Highgate Murugan Temple, London N6.*

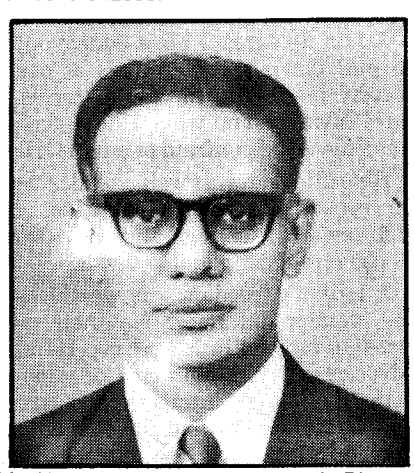
Dr. Sri Kumar *son of Mr. & Mrs. V. Sivasubramaniam of 30/1 Kachcheri East Lane, Jaffna and* **Indhumathi** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. P. Kulasingham of 7 Mayville Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 2HU on 31.3.91 at John Kelly School Hall, Neasden, London NW2.*

Balendra *eldest son of the late Thuraisingham and Mrs. A. Thuraisingham of 6 Kanthapurana Veethi, Kandarmadam, Jaffna and* **Sugitha** *eldest daughter of Dr. & Dr.(Mrs.) Suntharalingam, 17 Ashdown Drive, Wordsley, Stourbridge, West Midlands DY8 5QY on 31.3.91 at Highgate Murugan Temple, London N6.*

Ravlendrakumar *son of Mr. & Mrs. R. Kunasingam of 4 Southway, Raynes Park, London SW20 9JQ and* **Sathyaselvy** *daughter of Mr. & Mrs. S. Tharmalingam of 'Kamalapathy', Sithankerny, Jaffna on 1.4.91 at Highgate Murugan Temple, London N6.*

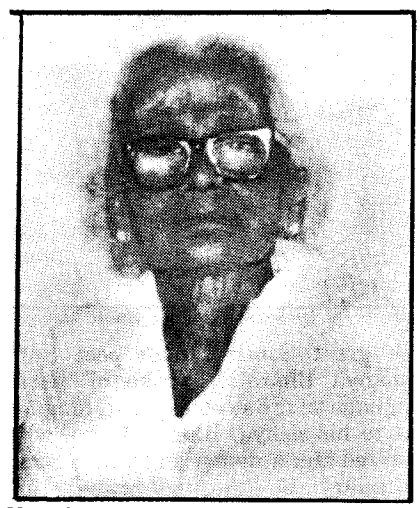
OBITUARIES

Mrs. Rupavathy Nadarajah *beloved wife of the late Dr. V. Nadarajah (Retired Chief Medical of Health, Colombo), mother of Nirmala Puvan Iswaran (Australia), Shamala Vijendra (Eastbourne, U.K.), and Dr.(Mrs.) Aruna Perumal (Canada); mother-in-law of Dr. Vijendra and Jayantha Perumal and grand mother of Anusha, Asha and Lavanya expired on Sunday, 17th March 1991. Funeral took place in Eastbourne, West Sussex, U.K. – Tel: 0323 642055.*



Mr. Velupillai Nadarajah, *formerly Director, Ceylon School of Social Work, son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Velupillai of Chetty Street, Nallur, Sri Lanka; son-in-law of the late Mr. K. Muthulingam and Mrs. Muthulingam of Tellipallai, Sri Lanka; beloved husband of Muthu-Ambikai; father of Dr. Sakunthala and Dr. Ravindran; father-in-law of Dr. Suresh Thayalan and Meera; grandfather of Arjun passed away in U.K. on 4th April 1991 – 150 Gorringe Park Avenue, Mitcham, Surrey CR4 2DX, U.K. Tel: 081 646 7257.*

Mr. Sabalingam Uthayalingam *(41) son of the late Mr. E. Sabalingam, formerly Principal of Jaffna Central & Jaffna Hindu colleges and the late Mrs. Malarjothi Sabalingam; beloved husband of Premaruba; father of Sarangan and Saravanan; brother of Dr. Jothilingam (U.K.), Mrs. Shanthi Mahendran (Bharain), Jeyalingam, Abayalingam, Mrs. Kalaichelvi Navendran (all of U.K.); son-in-law of Mr. & Mrs. Navaratnam of Kondavil Sri Lanka; passed away under tragic circumstances, knocked down by a motor vehicle, on 4.4.91 – 25 Elm Drive, North Harrow, Middx. HA2 7BS, U.K. Tel: 081 427 4153.*



Mrs. Annapooranam Thillainayagam *(79) wife of the late K. Thillainayagam, Retired Station Master, C.G.R., Sri Lanka of Kulamangal, Mallakam, Sri Lanka; beloved mother of Kugathas (Sri Lanka), Mrs. Navamany Kanagasooriam, Mavinthiridevi (both of Canada), Patkunadas (France), Mrs. Umadevi Balasubramaniam (Sri Lanka), Dr. Sivathasan, and Arulthas (both of U.K.); mother-in-law of Rajeswari, Kanagasooriam, Suntharavalli, Balasubramaniam, Jeyamani and Varnarani passed away on 22.3.91 in U.K. Her anthiyeddy rites were performed on 21.4.91 at Riverdale Hall, The Lewisham Centre, Rennell Street, London SE13 – 23 Spring Rice Road, Hither Green, London SE13. Tel: 081 318 6703.*

IN MEMORIAM

In Loving Memory of our Sister & Aunt **Mrs. Mangayatkarasi Arumainayagam (nee Marimuttu)**

Born: 20.2.1919 Rest: 23.4.1980

Ex-Principal Trincomalle Methodist Girls' English School & Ex-District Guide Commissioner.

Twentyfive years of dedicated service as Principal, loved and respected by all students and staff.

Eleven years have passed since your loving, genial face vanished from our midst with all glory, but not from our aching hearts, where it will always remain as our family Patron Saint, ideal irreparable sister and aunt. – Mr. & Mrs. T. Pararajasingham, nephews and nieces, 27 Mayford, Howard Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8SB.

Professor Singam is Dead

Archibald W. Singam, an authority on the Caribbean and a professor of political science at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York died of a brain tumour on 12 March 1991, at Tisch Hospital in the New York University Medical Centre. He was 58 years old and lived in Brooklyn.

Professor Singham was a founding member of the social sciences faculty of the University of West Indies, Jamaica, where he taught from 1960 to 1970. He also taught at the University of Michigan, Howard University of Washington and the University of Manchester in England before joining Brooklyn College.

Consultant to U.N. Agencies

He was a researcher and consultant to a number of United Nations Agencies and was well-known for his work on non-aligned and third world countries. He showed concern for the plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka, wrote several articles and participated in seminars.

He was also a senior fellow at the centre on the Study of Violence and Human Survival at John Jay College and the first scholar in residence at the New York State Martin Luther King Institute for Non-violence in Albany in 1990-1991.

He wrote several books including, 'Nonalignment in an Age of Alignments', 'Namibian Independence', 'A Global Responsibility' and with his wife 'The Hero and the Crowd in a Colonial Polity'. He was also a member of the editorial board of The Nation magazine.

Professor Singham, who was born in Burma of Sri Lankan parents, was educated in Sri Lanka and graduated from Wesleyan University. He received a masters degree and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

Besides his wife Shirley, who is the assistant provost of Hunter College, he is survived by a son, Roy of Chicago; a daughter, Shanti of Williamstown, Mass. and three grand children.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

May 3 *6.45pm* **Tamil Orphans Trust** *presents* **Children's Variety Entertainment** *at Brent Town Hall, Forty Lane, Wembley, Middx. Tel: 081 422 0012.*

May 5 *3.30pm* **Novena** *at* **Asian Chaplaincy,** *48 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HA. Tel: 071 222 2895.*

May 12 *6.00pm* **Cultural Evening and Art Exhibition** *at Chingford Assembly Hall, Station Road, Chingford, London E4. Tel: 081 514 6390.*

May 18 *6.50pm* **South London Tamil School** *presents* **a Cultural Evening including a Carnatic Vocal Recital by Smt Mathini Sriskandarajah** *at South Norwood Adult Education Centre, Sundown Road, London SE25. Tel: 081 291 2679.*

May 24 *7.45pm* **Flute Recital** *by* **Hariprasad Chaurasia** *at Queen Elizabeth Hall, South Bank Centre, London SE1 8XX. Tel: 081 904 6043.*

May 29 *8.00pm* **Veena Concert** *by* **Arunthathy Sriskantharajah** *at Purcell Room, South Bank Centre, London SE1 8XX. Tel: 081 471 2348.*

June 1 *7.00pm* **British Association of Young Musicians** *presents* **Bharatha Natyam Recital** *by* **Chitra Visweswaran** *at Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street, London W8 6NQ. Tel: Association Sargam 071 736 0910.*

At The Bhavan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071 381 3036/4608.

May 4 *5.30pm* **Ethics in World Religions** *with particular relevance to* **Buddhism** *by* **Ven. Vajirgnana.**

May 5 *6.00pm* **Carnatic Vocal Concert** *by* **Dr. M. Hariharan.**

May 11 *5.30pm* **The Ramayana and its relevance today** *by* **Mathoor Krishnamurti.**

May 18 *5.30pm* **Village India** – *A Slide Show presented by* **Mr. F.L. Locke.**

May 31 *7.45pm* **Raguvamsa Tilakam – Ramayana Dance feature** *presented by* **Chitra Visweswaran & her students.**

Galaxy of Musicians at Sri Thiagaraja Day

West London Tamil School celebrated Sri Thiagaraja Day with a five hour session of recitals of Vocal and Instrumental Carnatic music on 9.3.91 at the Wembley High School Hall. Cllr. T. Taylor, Deputy Mayor of Brent was the Chief Guest and complimented the school on organising a concert of eastern music of high standard. The vocalists were Ambika Thamotheram, M. Yogeswaran, Priyadarsharna Yogarajah, Kala Yogarajah, Sasikala Kothandapani, Puvana Ilampooranar, Saroja Ramakrishnan, Prema Navaneethayalan and Mrs. Paranthaman.

The violinists were Dr. Lakshmi Jayan, Arvind Jayan, Kartik Ragunathan and Aruntha Ratnasingam. The following played the Veena; Renuka Shriananda, Renuka Sivanandan, Shyamala Jayachandran, Suthamathy Srisatkunan, Kanchana Sivalingam The Flutists were M. Yogeswaran, Y. Balamurugan and Dr. T. Nimalaraj. Those on Mridangam, Ghattam, Ganjira and Morsing were I. Somasundara Desigar, Muthu Sivarajah, Anjalo Kumaradas, Kandiah Sithamparanathan, M. Sukumar, S. Kirupakaran, Yasakaran Sarma. The grand finale was the group rendering of Sri Thiagaraja's Pancharatna Keerthanas.

Shakespeare's 'Shakunthalam'

The well known English playwright if living today would have been pleased at the above title given to a Bharatha Natya Ballet (dance drama) produced by his namesake Srimathi Gunawathy Shakespeare of the Shakespeares School of Oriental Dancing in London. Mention must be made of the timing of this ballet which was a happy choice. Although credit to Shakunthalam is always attributed to the great Indian poet and dramatist Mahakavi Kalidas the story originally appeared in the first book of 'Mahabharat'. It was Bharat – the only son of Shakunthala and Dhushyantan who later became King of Hastinapur and is the starting point – direct ancestor of the Pandavas and Kauravas of the Guru Clan.

The story of Mahabharat which is now doing its run in BBC TV in its 45th weekly episode with about 45 more episodes to run is creating a strong influence amongst the Asian teenagers in U.K. who know nothing of our rich culture and therefore prefer to identify themselves with alien cultures as a result of which they are cast off as misfits or freaks in our present Society. 'Mahabharat' TV serial is doing immense service to the children of Asian parents in U.K. today. Mrs. Shakespeare's 'Shakunthalam' ballet has been staged at a time when Mahabharat is still fresh in the minds of these youngsters. The ideals emphasised in our great Hindu epics such as respect for elders, obedience to parents, respect for a spiritual Master/Guru clearly shown week after week in 'Mahabharat' TV serial have also been emphasised in Shakespeare's Shakunthalam – dance drama.

The participating dancers are mostly British born teenagers whose parents originally came from far away lands such as Mauritius, Jaffna, Nairobi in Kenya, Gujrat in India and many others. The ballet opens with the great Sage Viswamitra doing intense penance which frightened the Devas and Indra in Indra Loka, and the celestial nymph Menaka being sent by them to distract the Sage and entice him. Menaka gives birth to Shakunthala and

abandons her in the forest, and the well known story continues. The epic is beautifully narrated by the forty odd dancers who fitted into the roles assigned to them.

Nili Shah as Shakunthala and Nilam Pillay as Dhushyantan were clearly very impressive. Suman Pandia as Sage Viswamitra and Sage Kanva, Sunthari Kumaravel as Sage Durvasa and Palace Guard, Sonal Shah as Priyamvada and Fisherman and the talented Shenika Shakespeare as Apsaras Menaka and Gautami – in dual roles understood their different characteristics and performed well. However, a youngster barely six years of age stole the show in his role as Bharat – son of Shakunthala and Dhushyantan. Kannan Pillay – the only male in this all female cast – I am told is equally at ease in breakdancing as he is in Bharatha Natya.

An example of these youngsters captivating the mood of the entire audience was seen when they moved some members of the audience to tears in a scene of farewell to Shakunthala where she bids goodbye to her friends, birds, animals and plants before leaving her hermitage to see her husband Dhushyantan. Such is the power of communication via Abhinaya in Bharatha Natyam.

This is the second Bharatha Natyam ballet to go on stage in London following the successful staging of 'Kuravanchi' by The Laxmi Arts Centre. Srimathi Gunawathy Shakespeare deserves to be congratulated on the success of this venture in particular her efficient training of these youngsters and putting them on stage as brilliant artistes and performers. We hope that other dancing schools in London will select, choreograph, and stage in ballet form other great Indian epics so that these stories cause an everlasting impression amongst the present generation of Asian youngsters in Britain.

– Wimal Sockanathan.

Tamil New Year & 5th Anniversary Celebrations

The Institute of Tamil Culture, Surbiton, U.K., celebrated the Tamil New Year and their 5th Anniversary at a well attended function at the Surbiton Assembly Rooms on 7th April. It was a happy experience to watch children as young as 5 and 6 years old, who were born in the U.K. dancing, playing musical instruments and singing in Tamil. The adults too provided some items.

The Chief Guests were the Deputy Mayor of the Royal Borough of Kingston, Cllr. David Fraser and Mrs. Phliss Fraser, who expressed their happiness in taking part in the celebrations for the second year in succession. The Deputy Mayor congratulated the Institute for their significant contribution to the multi cultural life of the borough and hoped that he could on the next occasion speak in Tamil. Miss Pat Jones, the Head Teacher of Knollmead Primary School, where the Institute's classes are held complimented the staff for training the children to a high standard.

Mr. K. Jegatheeswaran, the Headmaster of the Institute thanked Mr. Robert McCloy, the Chief Executive of the borough and Miss Pat Jones for their help and guidance and also the staff and parents for their support.

Classes are conducted every Saturday between 9.00am and 1.00pm. For further details contact: K. Jegatheeswaran, Headmaster, Tel: 081 949 3012 or W. Thayalan, Administrator, Tel: 081 399 7848.

A Good Laugh for Dowry

A hilarious, appropriately titled and a timely play LONDON BRIDEGROOM (London Maappillai) and an exquisite dance recital by two highly talented exponents of the Bharata Natyam went on boards to an appreciative audience on Saturday 2 March at Riverdale Hall, London SE13.

The young dancers Vidya and Sathya Kuhanandan with nattuvangam support from Srimati Ragini Rajagopal along with an on-stage accompaniment, began the evening's entertainment with an invocation to Lord Sri Ganesha and proceeded on with numbers that carried the audience into the realms of the divine beings. Their interpretations of the lordly pranks of God-Child Krishna were meaningfully expressive and the adorations to Lord Sri Subramanya were serene and inspiring. They concluded their recital with the traditional mangalam and the audience blessed them with their spontaneous appreciation.

Playwright Manoharan who also produced and starred in the comedy LONDON BRIDEGROOM touched most of the facets of the incredible factors that still dominate and persist in the evil and inhuman dowry system. Weaving his thrusts and barbs on all aspects of Tamil social and family life, he has through the means of comic caricatures added a great deal of laughter into what are 'treasured and revered' strands that preserve such an archaic and intolerant system in the community.

Two fond parents in Sri Lanka receive a letter from London and even before they tear open the letter, they tear at each other in their excitement. And the news of course was that their son had passed his acountancy examinations in London and his return home was imminent.

Such news fly the neighbourhood and beyond and bring in those people that matter now into the arena – the brokers, the prospective fathers-in-law and many others who are part and parcel of the system. Manoharan's humour and wit gathers momentum, for after all these characters best consigned to legends are still alive and play their roles without being conscious that the world has moved considerably away from such systems.

They persist and the community suffers, and if comic caricatures cannot open the souls and hearts of dowry hunters what else will – and has not the system, so evil, now extended its tentacles to new Tamil habitations in various parts of the world?

In Manoharan's play, the brawls are plenty and these no doubt are typical of the tension dowry system promotes. However in the end, he touches the ideal the society so badly needs and that is, it is character, compatibility and the capacity for two young people to be committed to each other with dignity and pride are all that count and not marriage brokers, hard cash, property and even British passports that are considered vulture-style.

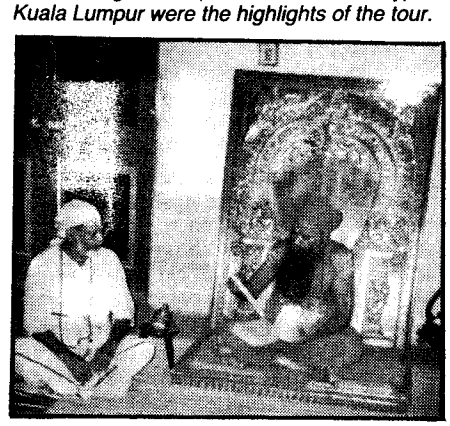
The events of the evening were possible through the hard work done by the Mahajana Old Students Association in London.

'In a world riddled with pain, we are grateful to anybody who can make us laugh; but to instruct at the same time is an excellence that few possess. The noble work in conservation and propagation of the best elements of our cultural heritage is a very committed spirit of service and the Mahajana past students in London deserve our commendations', commented one of the evening's guests.

Swami Siva Nandhi's Lecture Tour

Swami Siva Nandhi (formerly Mr. K. Gnanasurian), the spiritual Head of the London Meikandaar Aadheenam has successfully completed a Saiva Siddhanta lecture tour of Colombo, Madras, Chidamparam, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang.

The keynote message emphasized at the above centres was the need to bring religion into the everyday life so that the younger generation understand and appreciate Saiva rituals. The Sri Muneeswaram Temple lectures in Penang, organised by Dr. K. Loganathan and the Arulneri Thirukkoottam Seminar organised by Sri V. Seenivacagam and Dr. S. Gangadaran (of Madurai University) at Kuala Lumpur were the highlights of the tour.



Swamiji with Head of Thiruppanandaal Mutt

While in Tamilnadu, Swamiji was ceremoniously received and honoured by the Heads of the Saiva Mutts at Dharmapuram, Thiruvavaduthurai and Thiruppanandal. Discussions were held with the head of the Dharmapuram Mutt for the holding of the 3rd International Saiva Siddhanta Seminar at McMaster University, Canada later this year.

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